Blow-up of 'N SYNC

March 1999

Upbeat

MAGAZINE FOR THE YOUTH

B*Witched on a rollercoaster ride

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Bhangra superstar Malkit Singh

Girls grab most of the Grammys

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LETTERS

NEW BREED OF TEENAGERS

It was certainly nice to read the cover story of the Feb. issue, on GenerationNext, the new breed of teenagers, who have placed their career ambitions above everything else and are single-mindedly in pursuit of fame and fortune, both of which are wedded to each other today.

Of course, the main part of the success stories today, is the availability of opportunities. Some years back, it was only an engineer or a doctor, who was said to be lucky. Today, if one is street smart, can talk fluently et al, there's television, VJing, modelling, even singing (Look at how the music companies encourage newcomers) and a lot many other alternative careers open to them. Good of Monisha Khatwani to be one of these go-getters, it just goes to show, where there's a will, there's a way. In fact, folks, I'm sure that most of us Upbeaters would appreciate such cover stories from people from different professions, who have carved a niche for themselves. It's really inspiring to read such articles.

AMIT LOIWAL,
Baroda

THAT WASN'T CRICKET!

It was with a great sense of shame and revulsion that we saw the behaviour of the crowds at Eden Gardens during the cricket match with Pakistan. And to think that Eden Gardens was the Mecca of Indian cricket, a place where every cricketer wanted to play. While Jyoti Basu boasted that he would be able to take on any threats of disruption by the Shiv Sena, he could not prevent his fellow Calcuttans from disrupting the match.

After the play was held up following Sachin Tendulkar's dismissal the Indian captain should have conceded the match to the visiting team to make up for the crowd's rowdy behaviour and to send a clear signal that the rowdiest the crowd behaved, the worse it would be for the Indian cricket team. The BCCI should announce that in view of the crowd's behaviour in this match and the shameful semi-finals against Sri Lanka two years ago. Calcutta will not be allowed to host any cricket matches, big or small, domestic or international, for the next five years.

SRIDHAR RAO,
Chennai

AGE OF SLOTH IS UPON US

The age of sloth is almost upon us. Labour-saving devices being developed today could leave the human race facing an epidemic of obesity.

Scientists have forecast that in 50 years people will save an hour a day as a result of new technology but that the

resultant inactivity could take its toll on their waistline and threaten their health.

Unless people change their attitude towards exercise, the average British man will become 20lb. heavier at 14 st., while the average woman's weight will increase by 17 lb. to settle at 12st. 3 lb. We already do a third less exercise than people did a generation ago.

Dr. Andrew Prentice, a nutrition expert at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine said: "Obesity is already a big case of ill-health and it's going to get worse if people continue to get more inactive as a result of these labour-saving devices."

Technology and robotics experts say the next five decades will see almost all physical activities replaced or augmented by computers and machinery. This was the stuff of post-war prophecies but it looks as though it will finally now come true.

All this is pretty unnerving as what happens to the rest of the world now happens in India. Computers are definitely overtaking man! Let's heed the warning and act accordingly.

NEERAJ BAJAJ,
Mumbai

COVER STORY INSPIRING

The cover story in your February '99 issue was quite inspiring for teenagers like us who are aspiring for fame and fortune. I agree with you that today's generation living in a highly competitive age wants to be the richest, smartest and savviest with money and power being the overriding passion, no matter what it takes to achieve success. There are lots of Monishas today who have the killer instinct to pursue their goals. It's certainly good to read about an 18-year-old who fights hard in a strange city to land assignments in modelling and TV serials and achieves success in a short span of one and a half years by sheer dint of hard work, perseverance and some talent. There are some kids who may fall by the wayside but a lesson we learn from Ms. Khatwani is that if you pursue your goals with single-minded dedication, you can realise your dreams and ambitions.

While it's good to aspire for the pinnacle one should not take it badly if one reaches half-way. Besides I feel one should not be too obsessed with money at the cost of being an uncaring human being. While pursuing fortune, one should not lose track of our feelings for our friends and family.

NEENA GUPTA,
New Delhi

AVOID DRINKS, DRUGS FOR HEALTHY SEX

Your 'Sex Education' column in the Feb '99 issue was very enlightening. Today's teenagers are spoilt rotten and a lot of them are drinking, smoking and taking drugs at a very young age. With parents indulging their children and giving them lots of money and with a lot of temptations like pubs and discs around more and more kids are getting addicted to drinks, drugs and fags. All these three habits are very harmful and ruin you physically, mentally and financially. They also affect your sex life and that can lead to a lot of other problems.

Since teenagers have a lot of life ahead and they have lots to accomplish, they should totally stay away from these vices at such a young age.

Quite a few of your columns like Sound Advice, Career Counselling are very helpful.

SUJATHA SINGH,
Mumbai

MEL GIBSON'S BRAVE HEART

It was great reading about Mel Gibson in your 'Spotlight' in February '99 issue. A top director and Hollywood actor, one didn't know this Australian is a great man too. Imagine a successful man like him admits to his religious faith, spurns the typical perks of celebrity, drives to Hollywood functions instead of renting a chauffeured limousine and on location shoots, he stands in line with the rest of the crew to get lunch from the catering truck. And what's even more admirable is that his family is most important to him and he asserts his commitment to his marriage in terms that are very un-Hollywood. And what sets him apart is his brave heart!

Men like this are not born every day. It makes one feel good that even in Hollywood you find the likes of Gibson.

SUNIL ADVANI,
Pune

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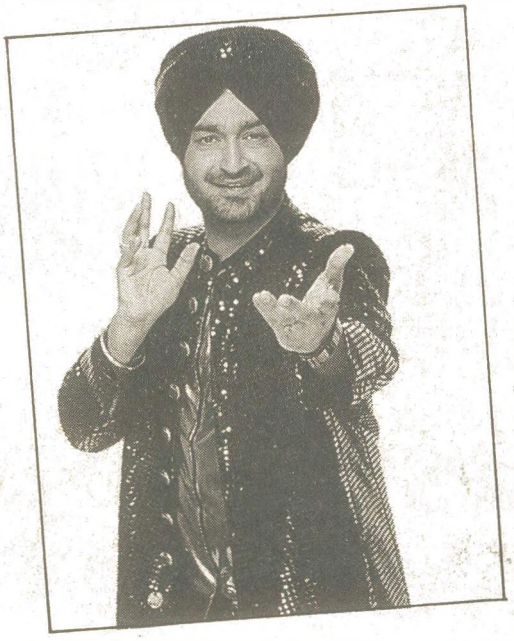
12 FOCUS

Malkit Singh, the Bhangra superstar, who has come out with a new album under the Virgin label



titled 'Malkit Singh-Millenium Mix'. All the songs have been remixed and recorded in London. He had flown all the way from London for the video shoot in Mumbai. In this tete-a-tete, Malkit Singh talks about his latest album, his life, his career as a musician, the music scenario et al.

18 COVER STORY

It all started with the sexy Spice Girls. The girl bands became a rage. Then came the All Saints. And now it's B*Witched, the four, wild and wacky Irish girls who've been topping the charts and are hot, hot, hot all over the world. The good news is that they may even come to India and liven things up for our desi youth. With the incredible chart success of their first, two singles-the instantly infectious 'Cest La Vie' and 'Rollercoaster', this multi-talented girl band has become incredibly famous and have breathed fresh life into the pop charts. Read all about these spirited teenagers and excerpts from their interview.

28 MUSIC SCENE

February 22 saw the Andheri (W) Sports Complex in Mumbai come alive with a scintillating performance by British band UB40, who regaled the Mumbai audiences with a generous helping of their addictive brand of Reggae Music. The energetic 90-minute long performance saw the good old lads from Birmingham serve up a platter full of their old and new tracks. UB-40 certainly wowed the Mumbai audience with their memorable show. UPBEAT also had a chat with these guys who rocked Mumbai.

52 TRAVEL

Not only is Mexico a place of amazing beauty and peace with great stretches of unspoiled countryside, extraordinary colonial towns and the surprisingly vital and visible legacy of the great Mayan archaeological sites on the Yucatan Peninsula; there are also some of the world's most beautiful and sophisticated resorts. These range from Isabel Goldsmith's private paradise on the Pacific to a 'new' sixteenth-century hacienda in the Yucatan. Once you are there, it makes sense to try out several of these hotels or-since some are best reached via cities such as Miami or LA-to visit the States on the same trip. Described here are some of these fabulous hotel resorts.

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Just another evening out

It was the family's evening out. And we didn't bother to leave the lights on at home to discourage burglary. We felt it was unnecessary.

If the burglar wanted the lights, he could damn well turn them on himself.

As usual, my teenage daughter drove or rather flew the family car. And when we came to a red light, we simply flew over it. It saved us the trouble of seeking permission to land every time.

Young people today have such a keen sense of the value of time. My only advice to my daughter was : "Don't fly too low. We could hit something."

When we came to the restaurant where we were to dine, my daughter crashed the car right inside. But she stopped just in time before we ran over a waiter.

So I complimented her on her driving — if not on her choice of the parking spot.

"We drivers have to be extra alert all the time", she declared. "You never know when someone will carelessly step right in front of your car indoors — then blame you for running him over !"

"And we have to park the car where we can easily keep an eye on it while we dine here", she went on to explain. "Do you have any idea how many cars are stolen in this city every day ?"

You cannot do without young people. They think of everything.

We dined out once in a while for a change, as on this occasion. Well, this time it was a change all right.

For one thing, the aroma from the kitchen was wonderful. No wonder, the kitchen had caught fire.

And, for a change, we didn't have to beep our waiter on his pager to get some service. He was prompt in serving us all the water so we could put out our flaming table-cloth as the fire spread.

"They store so much water", I observed, impressed, "this must be a very clean restaurant."

"There's a cockroach in my dish", said my kid son, "but at least they've served it hot, thanks to the fire in here."

"I'm sure the cook here washes his hands thoroughly", I declared.

"No doubt", agreed my wife," after putting a dead insect in the customer's dish."

And, for a change, the restaurant ran out of water, if not items on the menu card.

"Why should we keep fire extinguishers", explained the waiter, "we don't serve anything too spicy."

But we were assured that the fire brigade was on the way.

"We'd better leave", I suggested finally, "what if the fire brigade pours too much water in here ? I can't swim."

SUBROTO MUKHERJEE

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LETTER
from the Editor

Adolescent crime has risen to alarming levels as society gets very violent in India. On February 15, a 77-year-old Vijaya Parmar in Mumbai was allegedly murdered by her own grandson and his friends. Three boys walked into Seema Gakkhar's home at Rajouri Garden, Delhi, then strangled and stabbed her and daughter Pooja. What gave them the idea? A successful heist at his own home by Seema's son, Rajeev, who stole Rs. 1.3 lakhs from his affluent parents. These are not isolated cases, hundreds of incidents of brutality by the youth have been taking place recently.

The brutality the middle class is breeding in its youngsters is shocking. Ambitious and aggressive, often they will stop at nothing for money, passion or even just a whim. What is disturbing is that these are not deprived youngsters with no education and little money. These are youngsters who could be in your very home. This unprovoked aggression, a mixture of a lack of parental guidance and excessive exposure to an often violent media, is becoming widespread. Often it takes just a little spark to set it off. As in New Delhi recently when a 14-year-old killed another student of Army Public School for Rs. 10.

Adolescence is any way a crisis period, even for the most normal and balanced individuals who have some anti-social traits in them. Unfortunately, in today's nuclear families and with both parents working there's a lack of parental control on children. The great stress on materialism as well as the low thresholds of tolerance is what drives people to commit such crimes. The trend is not restricted to big cities alone, but was also being observed in smaller towns. It's true that the immense exposure to violence on television and films has made the present generation emotionally cold. Lack of parental control too is in large measure responsible for children going wayward.

Things are getting out of hand. Something drastic has to be done to remedy the violent situation. Next issue we plan to do an in-depth story on adolescent crime. Readers who are interested can also send in their suggestions.

The cover story this month turns the spotlight on a teenage Irish girl band B*Witched who have not only been burning the charts but we have nail enamels in India named after them. Shows what a marketing weapon pop stars can be.

We also have plenty of other good stories and our usual columns. Happy reading!

Indra Gidwani

ASK YOUR C

I'm in the 10th std. and would like to join the merchant navy. Do I have to join the Science stream and how do I go about it ? Is it a good career?

Karan Thakur, Agra

A career in the merchant navy is adventurous and involves staying away from home for long periods. The pay packet is lucrative and there is opportunity for travel. The Ministry of Surface Transport is responsible for training personnel and has established a number of training institutions. They are :

1. Directorate General of Shipping, Jahaz Bhavan, W. H. Marg, Mumbai;
2. L.B.S. College of AMS and R, Hay Bunder Road, Mumbai;
3. T.S. Chanakya, Nerul, Navi Mumbai; and
4. Marine Engineering and Research Institute, Calcutta.

Application forms are issued in March and the last date for submission is in May. You'll have to enrol in a science college as the minimum qualification required for the course is H.Sc. or its equivalent with Physics, Chemistry and Maths. There is a three-year degree course which leads to a B.Sc. (Nautical Science) at Navi Mumbai and a four-year marine engineering course offered by the Marine Engineering and Research Institute. Selections are made through a joint entrance exam conducted by the IITs in May. The age of the candidate should not exceed 20 years. Application forms are available in November every year and the last date for submission is in January.

What are the requirements to be an air-hostess? I'm doing my final B.A. and would like to be an air-hostess.

Seema Iyer, Chennai

You should be a graduate with a good knowledge of spoken English. Knowledge of other languages such as Hindi and any foreign language would be an added advantage. You should also be in good health as the work involves long flight hours. Your minimum height should be 157.5 cms. and you should be between 19 - 26 years of age. Other requirements are normal vision or corrected vision with contact lenses up to 6.6 and a normal haemoglobin level. A degree or diploma in tourism can better your chances of selection. Initially, the candidate has to go through a written test for selection, advertisements for which appear in the newspapers.

I'm an H.Sc. (Science) student and would like to do software engineering. Kindly give me all the information regarding eligibility, colleges, prospects etc.

Siddharth Naik, Pune

Software engineers are responsible for developing computer programmes. In many cases, they design packages according to the needs of the clients. Employment opportunities are available with large computer companies or in the field of research and development. In order to go in for software engineering, you'll have to take a course in electronic engineering and computer science after H.Sc.

Many engineering colleges offer computer science. Some of the institutions are Visvesvaraja REC, Nagpur; the IITs in Mumbai, Kanpur, New Delhi, Kharagpur and Madras; School of Mathematics and Computer Information Science, Hyderabad; Department of Computer Science, University of Delhi, New Delhi and Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

All these programmes require an H.Sc. with physics, chemistry and mathematics and are of a four - year duration. The selection is generally based on an entrance test and personal interview to assess the aptitude of a candidate.

I'm doing my H.Sc. (Science). I'm a bright student and would like to be an architect. What are the prospects in this field, what are the good colleges, eligibility and the admission procedures?

Naresh Rao, Mumbai

There's a great demand for trained architects. B.Arch. is a five-year course after the H.Sc. level. Entrance to most architectural institutions is through an entrance exam which judges a candidate's artistic ability. All colleges of architecture require you to pass the H.Sc. exam in the science stream. Although there are many institutions conducting courses in architecture, the popular ones are the Centre of Environment and Planning Technology (Ahmedabad); J. J. School of Architecture, Mumbai, and the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi.

I'm in my final B.Com. and am interested in pursuing a career in Banking. How do I go about it and are there specialised courses in India/abroad for aspiring bankers?

Nalini Singh, Chandigarh

For careers in banking in public sector banks, you need a graduate degree and to be able to tackle the written test and interview successfully. You have to be between 21 to 30 years of age. Apply against announcements of vacancies.

There are no specialised programmes available that you can take up for careers in banking. A PGDBA (Post-graduate diploma in business administration) or an MBA in Finance from a reputed institution is ideal.

Further training in specialised areas can be taken when you are assigned to particular departments in a bank.

I'm a commerce graduate and would like to be a financial analyst. How do I go about it?

Shekhar Gupta, Mumbai

You could take up the three-year Chartered Financial Analyst's course offered by the Institute of Chartered Financial Analysts of India, Hyderabad or the three-year part-time Master's degree in Financial Services of University of Mumbai at the Alkesh Dinesh Mody Institute of Investment Studies. If an M.Com. is your ideal bet, then you should find out the combination of compulsory and elective subjects.

I'm a Section-A AMIE student working in a large organisation. After completing section B, can I get admission into the last year of B.E.

Sharad Apte, Mumbai

Association of the

OUNSELLOR

Institution of Engineers (AMIE) is considered equivalent to a B.E. degree from any university. It is in Section B that you will specialise in any branch of engineering. So there's no need to seek admission in final B.E. However if you are seeking personal guidance you could sign up for the evening classes held at VJTII in co-ordination with the Institution of Engineers.

I'm in H.Sc. (Arts). I'm interested in doing a Library Science course. Which are the institutions offering this course and what is the eligibility criteria for admission?

Tarini Lal, Mumbai

The minimum eligibility criteria for admission is a graduate degree so you have to wait a while. Locally, you can take up this one-year course both at SNDT Women's University and University of Mumbai.

I'm in my final B.Sc. and would like to do a Masters in Food Technology. Can you give me information on the Central Food Technology Research Institute (CETRI), Mysore?

Lata Sreenivasan, Mangalore

The institute, situated in Chelvanda, Manrion, Mysore-570013 offers a two-year M.Sc. in Food Technology. You need to have at least a second class degree in either science, agriculture or engineering with chemistry and maths at the H.Sc. level. Besides the Masters' degree, the institute also conducts other short-term courses of six to eight weeks duration, which include cold storage of perishable products; food microbiology technology; fruits and vegetables, rice, poultry and fish packing technology; analysis, standardisation and quality control in food processing industries etc. Other short-term courses (of 3 to 26 days duration) offered are: technology of storage, processing and quality control of foodgrains for FCI officials; refresher course on foodgrains for senior officials for FCI (Food Corporation of India); thermal processing of fruits and vegetables; sausage-making technology; advanced course in fumigating technology; vacuum evaporation for fruit juices and pulps; flavours for food industries and enology (wine-making). Some of these courses are offered only to sponsored candidates.

I'm in SSC and would like to become a ceramic engineer. Which are the reputed institutes offering a course in this field and what are the eligibility requirements for admission?

Rajesh Bhatia, Mumbai

The institutions conducting a course in ceramic engineering are:

1. Indian Institute of Ceramics, Calcutta;
2. University College of Science and Technology, Calcutta;
3. Institute of Technology, Varanasi;
4. M.S. University of Baroda, Baroda;
5. PDA College of Engineering, Gulbarga.

All these institutions offer either a four-year B.Sc. or a B.Tech. in Ceramics. To apply for these courses, you must have passed the H.Sc. exam in the science stream with physics, maths and chemistry as your subjects.

I'll be appearing for my H.Sc. (Science) next year and would like to be a doctor. Kindly let me know when the advertisement for the entrance exam for MBBS and BDS medical courses appears. When are the exams held and which universities offer these courses?

Shilpa Rane, Pune

The notification for the entrance exam for the All India Pre-medical/pre-dental entrance exam is given in December and the exam is held during the second week in May. The last date for receipt of applications is February and the exam is conducted by the Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi. Some of the colleges which give admission on the basis of the all-India entrance tests are the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi; the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune and the Medical College, Bharatiya Vidyapeeth, Pune. Besides these, there are government medical colleges and private colleges in the state, admission to which is governed by the state rules. The eligibility is H.Sc. with physics, chemistry and biology. The notification is given in May and the last date is June. It's advasable to check the latest rules with regard to medical college admissions with the Directorate of Medical Education and Research (Maharashtra), at the Government Dental College Building, 4th Floor, St. George's Hospital Compound, CST, Mumbai-1, Maharashtra before the H.Sc. results.

I'll be appearing for H.Sc. (Science) this year. I'd like to join the Merchant Navy as a marine engineer. How do I go about it?

Ashok Rao, Mangalore.

The marine engineering course of training is conducted by the Marine Engineering Research Institute (MERI), Calcutta formerly known as the Directorate of Marine Engineering Training (DMET). The marine engineering training schedule is spread over a period of four years and it leads to a graduation certificate considered equivalent to a first degree in engineering by the Ministry of Human Resource Development for appointment in the senior services of the government. During the four-year course much importance is attached to participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities of the institute. Cadets are given exposure to the fundamental engineering science together with specialised knowledge of theoretical and practical marine engineering and basic knowledge of humanities and the social sciences. Admission to the course is open to students who have completed the plus two or equivalent examination with physics, chemistry and mathematics and secured at least 35 per cent marks. An entrance examination is held for admission. The nature of the entrance test is a combination of the objective and subjective type of questions. The written test is followed by an interview which is basically a test of personality. The merchant navy offers bright prospects to marine engineers.

C.C.

Everything you always wanted to know about careers and where to pursue them will be answered by our Career Counsellor. So send in your queries. No individual replies will be given.

Multilingualism on the web

Multilingualism on the web is about creating and maintaning versions of a document in multiple languages on the web. There could be a master document with translations, or several language originals to be aligned or compared to get the result. When a document is available in a variety of languages and the translations are more or less aligned, it is possible to create links automatically between the different versions, or multi-headed links that target all of the versions at the same time.

The main hindrances to achieving multilingualism on web are the poor standards and protocols, when it comes to multilingual text representation and rendering. Of late, newer standards and protocols have been proposed and implemented for the purpose of web-based multilingualism. The newer version of HTTP (version 1.1) has several new header fields, especially to aid language negotiation, and, thereby, to achieve multilingualism on web. HTML has also been modified to include tags, which allows one to specify language and direction attributes of a particular section of the text. Technologies like Open Type fonts from Microsoft, True Doc from Bitstream, and the Web Embedding Font Tools (WEFT) have also come into being which help in negotiation and dynamic rendering of web documents on the internet.

The increasing dominance of Unicode over the traditional ASCII code is also playing an important role in this revolution. The Unicode standard uses a 16-bit code which can accommodate 6,500 characters as against the 7-bit ASCII code with just 128 alphanumeric characters. This makes it possible to include multilingual alphanumeric characters. However, Unicode has some limitations when it comes to internet communication. For instance, while Unicode permits the viewing of Kanji script, it doesn't identify an email address in Arabic. And for applications other than documenting, Unicode requires specific software interface, which again adds to the complexity of using the code on various platforms.

But definitely, Unicode has greatly contributed in expanding the scope of multilingualism on the web, though at the expense of the communications bandwidth. The overheads associated with Unicoding are much more than ASCII. Similar problem exists with the different font enablement technologies. For instance, an embedded multilingual word document using MS Open Type Font and WEFT of size 40k has 39k of overhead bits. Moreover, the currently available multilingual font embedding technologies have inherent disadvantages like security risks, disk usage space and IPR-related issues. Again there is always this issue of non-portability or limited portability of the currently available technologies. Like MS's Open Type fonts work only on Windows platform and is supported by IE only. On the other hand, the True Doc fonts can be ported on Windows, Unix and Mac but lacks wide browser support. It can only support Netscape.

In such a scenario, Java, many feel, is the best thing to have happened and offers a very dynamic solution for web-enabled multilingualism. Its universal portability makes it ideal for such applications. Also, since Java is inherently secure, applets written in the language do not pose any security threats to the client system. Just like a Java Virtual Machine, it is easy to devise a program in Java that can be sent across the network to the client side thus solving the problem of portability. And with the efficient code Java is, these applets are also less taxing on the bandwidth.

There is a package for printing text in Indian language scripts called ITRANS. Called Indian Language Transliterator, it does the transliteration mapping and the fonts may be developed elsewhere. The input is in a transliterated form with each letter in an Indian language assigned an English equivalent and one uses the English forms to construct what will eventually print out in the Indian language script.

Hi-tech notebook Computer launched

Allied Computers Industries (ACi), United Kingdom's premiere Notebook computer specialist company, launched its new range of Notebook Computers in Mumbai recently. ACi enters the Indian market for the first time in a 50 : 50 Joint Venture with noted entrepreneur and IT Training specialist, Mr. Rajesh Tolia. With an initial investment of Rs. 2 crore in the inaugural phase, ACi (India) will market three Notebook models - Kudos, Emerald and Mirage in Mumbai and then expand its operations to the other metros in the coming months.

Spearheaded since 1991 by Mr. Nigel Woolf (Chairman) and Mr. Hirji Patel (Managing Director), ACi has led the UK market for researching, developing and introducing the very latest Notebook technologies available at value for money prices. ACi (India) Pvt. Ltd. has introduced Notebooks in the Indian market under three technological specifications and corresponding price ranges.

Speaking at the conference, Mr. Nigel Woolf, Chairman, ACi (UK) said, "The Indian Notebook computer market is under-developed and inflexible due to high pricing of the existing brands. We aim to develop this nascent market by providing our Indian consumers with state-of-the-art Notebooks at a price which is 25% to 30% lower than the existing brands, and complementing it with premium after-sales service that only a notebook specialist company can provide. This will effectively reduce the price differential between Notebook PCs and Desktops, add versatility to market conditions, and provide greater options to the consumers."

"We believe that providing the customer with leading technology is only the beginning of the business relationship. All customers, will have the confidence that when they purchase an ACi Notebook; they will be looked after for life. With lifetime technical support provided for all products purchased, customers will be able to get professional and helpful advice on all aspects of their equipment," emphasised Mr. Rajesh Tolia, Director, ACi (India).

Initially, ACi will set up the head office in Mumbai with a full-fledged unit separately set up for the assembling of the notebooks. ACi will employ Indian professionals for technical support as well as for sales and marketing. All employees will receive specialised training from the UK office in order to imbibe ACi's stringent regulations regarding technological expertise as well as service techniques and policies.

Engineering labs will initially be housed in Mumbai but within 12 months, it is envisaged that these will be situated in all the major cities through India. Within two to three years, ACi plans to cover all major IT cities in India by citing local sales and service facilities. It aims at capturing the whole of the Asian market from its Indian operation.

ACi has won over 30 international awards for its products and services, outplaying well-known brands such as Toshiba, IBM and Compaq in the process. ACi's awards include prizes for Innovation, Design, Performance and most recently, for Quality of Customer Service.

A few of ACi's distinguished clients include British Aerospace, British Telecom, Compusys, Defence Research Agency, Electrolux, Gieves & Hawkes, Hewlett Packard, Ministry of Defence, Royal Navy, Tarmac, University of Cambridge, Walt Disney and Yamaha.

In order to reduce the pricing differential between Notebooks and Desktops, ACi plans to provide Indian buyers with a product priced 25% to 30% lower in comparison to the lowest priced Notebook PC.

Title	Range	Pricing
ACi Emerald	Low Range	From Rs. 59,950/- onwards
ACi Kudos	Mid Range	From Rs. 99,950/- onwards
ACi Mirage	High Range	From Rs. 1,89,950/- onwards

Little known facts about STD & AIDS

Q. What is STD? How can one know that one has STD?

A. STD (Sexually Transmitted Diseases) as the name suggests can be got through sexual contact. STD includes not only the well-known Venereal Diseases (VD) — gonorrhoea and syphillis, but also includes other diseases which are unfortunately becoming more and more common, such as Genital Herpes and Chlamydia. They can infect men, women and children. A pregnant woman can infect her child.

Venereal Disease is highly infectious. It is common among the younger generation when a free attitude to sex is adopted.

Look out for the symptoms and act immediately.

a) If you have a burning sensation while urinating; discharge from the vagina or penis.

b) Itching sensation around the genitals.

c) Sores or a small cluster of blisters on the penis or around the vagina.

These symptoms can appear from 2 to 90 days after sexual contact. They may even disappear after a few days, but this does not mean that you are cured. They may flare up later on and enter the bloodstream even damaging the reproductive system. As the symptoms of STD may occur within your body with a few external manifestations, people may postpone treatment which has serious consequences later on in life. You can get reinfected by sexual contact with an infected person. There are no vaccines against STD.

STD is curable and treatment with antibiotics by a recognised medical practitioner should be started at once.

Q. I am just sixteen and have never been out with a girl. I have suddenly developed scratching and skin infection between my thighs. My friend says I might be having AIDS. He now does not want to even shake hands with me. I am very worried, please advise.

A. The infection you have is probably ringworm and treatment from your doctor should be quickly successful. You certainly do not have AIDS, but you should know more about it.

AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is an infectious disease spread by a virus called HIV (Human Immune Deficiency Virus) which can damage the body's defence system so that it

cannot fight infection. Some people may have the virus (HIV positive) without developing AIDS. They may have no symptoms of disease, but can still infect others.

AIDS is spread when blood, semen or vaginal secretions of an infected person, come in contact with the blood or mucous membranes of a healthy person. The virus is spread by:

- Sexual intercourse (homosexual or heterosexual) with an infected person. Even oral sex may carry a risk if you have cuts or sore places in your mouth or sexual parts.
- Contaminated needles and syringes.
- Transfusion of infected blood.
- An infected mother to her unborn child during pregnancy or delivery.

Q. How can we protect ourselves or prevent the spread of AIDS?

A. Since the virus is found in blood, semen, vaginal secretions and in saliva (only a small quantity), some ways to avoid getting AIDS include;

- abstaining from sexual intercourse.
- if you decide to be sexually active then stick to only one partner. It is safer to stay away from any casual sexual relationship outside marriage.
- use a condom when having sexual intercourse.
- do not have sex with a prostitute or with people who go to them.
- ensure that sterilised or disposable syringes and needles are used when taking an infection (or donating blood). Ensure that any device that punctures the skin, including tatooing and acupuncture needles and equipment for earpiercing or removing hair by electrolysis are sterilised.
- make sure that instruments for circumcision are sterilised.
- accept blood donations only from known tested donors.
- an HIV carrier should avoid becoming pregnant.

Persons who suspect or know that they are HIV carriers should avoid being reinfected by AIDS virus and avoid spreading the infection by:

- not having sexual intercourse or
- using a condom during sexual intercourse.
- washing/boiling their soiled linen or clothes separately.
- not giving blood for transfusion.
- treating any other infection viz. tuberculosis, VD, etc.

Remember that so far there is no cure for and no vaccine against AIDS.

Q. What do you advise in case of an unplanned pregnancy?

A. An unplanned pregnancy usually occurs in a marriage unless contraceptives or other precautions are taken in order to space or limit the number of children. If these precautions fail then too an unplanned pregnancy may occur. Such pregnancies which may often occur due to extra-marital relations may result in tragedy. Suicides or death due to infection can be caused by unhygienic conditions when unqualified persons are approached for an abortion. To be wise before the event by adopting a correct family planning method is very important. But should you or any of your friends get into trouble, you should go and see your doctor or approach an approved centre, marked M.T.P (Medical Termination of Pregnancy), for medical help. Such centres are generally attached to the big public hospitals in large cities. Do not, under any circumstances put yourself in the hands of quacks.

Q. I am a bachelor of 33. Because of tremendous mental pressure and anxiety, I started going to prostitutes for intercourse at least ten to fifteen times. Sometimes I used condoms and sometimes emotionally I did not use it, although I was quite aware of AIDS. At present I am facing the following problems:

1. The front of my penis which generally looks reddish, now looks pale and dried.
2. The whole penis has become squeezed and the size of the same has become considerably short as compared to the past.
3. The penis does not get erection at all.
4. I find that the semen has also become thinner as compared to the past.

Besides I am also suffering continuously from cold and scars inside the mouth at random. However, I am very much frightened that I might have been infected with the AIDS virus.

Please advise me what I should do at present.

A. Safer sex procedures particularly using condoms, is an everytime action. To gamble when you know the consequences is like the dice heavily loaded against you. Your first three symptoms indicate you are really very frightened. The best advice would be for you to go and consult a Uro-Genital Surgeon. Either ask your family physician to advise the person's name or go to a General Hospital's Outdoor Clinic. Alternatively, consult the Yellow Pages of the Telephone Directory under doctors. Regarding the thinning of the semen this does not indicate any defect because sperms, the active mobile bodies which are responsible for fertilisation only constitute 10% of the seminal fluid. The remaining fluid is made up of prostate and seminal fluid which thins or thickens according to the number of times it is ejaculated.

Q. My friend who is a drug addict has got AIDS. Although we were very good friends, I am very scared to come near him in case I too get the disease. My parents have also forbidden me to have anything to do with him. Please advise me on what to do.

A. People with AIDS and HIV are often depressed, afraid and lonely. They need social contact and support just as anyone else. Friendship and support are the most important things you have to offer, to help them to come to terms with these feelings. So don't break up a friendship because someone you know has AIDS or HIV. There is no need to, as the virus is not spread through everyday social contact — such as living together, shaking hands, playing together, eating together. It is also not spread by food, water, sneezing, insect bites, toilet seats and towels.

(Send your questions marked 'Sex Education' for reply by Dr. Mahinder C. Watsa, Director, Medikon Sexual Sciences)

Malkit Singh: Bhangra superstar

Malkit Singh, the music messiah who has taken Bhangra - the sound of Punjabi people to realms unknown, has come up with his album "Malkit Singh-Millenium Mix". The album has eight songs in all and includes some of his greatest hits like "Tootak Tooktak Thootian", "Gurh nale ishq mitha" and "Bhangra paune jee karda". All the songs have been remixed and recorded in London. The songs have been written and composed by Malkit Singh himself and another lyric writer from Punjab.

Malkit Singh had flown all the way from London to get the video shooting done in Mumbai by director Ken Ghosh. The music has been released by Virgin audio of London and Malkit says, "when Ken Ghosh, Virgin music and I are together, we should go places". He has high opinion of Ken Ghosh for he is the man who started the trend of music videos in India.

Debuting in the UK in 1984, Malkit Singh's first album the classic "Nach Gidde Wich" was recorded in a record fourteen hours stint. It spawned the title track and the infectious "Boliyan" collective of various traditional folk songs. "Gurh nale ishq mitha" - the benchmark sound of eighties Bhangra - was later featured as the pivotal theme of "Raggamuffin mix" and became one of the most popular videos on Asian televison in 1998.

In this tete-a-tete, Malkit Singh dwells at length on his latest album and overall music scenario.

Q. Tell us about your previous albums.

A. Before "Tootak tootak thootiyan", we have released two to three other albums but all in Punjab because at that time there were not many channels and certainly no music videos. "Tootak tootak thootian" was the first Punjabi song to hit the market in India as well as abroad. Bhangra pop started with this song. Things really started happening with the coming of satellite television. And now everybody wants "Tootak tootak thootian".

Q. With so much of Bhangra pop around, how will you carve out a niche for yourself?

A. I was the first one to popularies Bhangra pop. Everyone has heard about "Tootak tootak thootian" but no one had really seen it since it wasn't on a video. That is the reason we are shooting the video. It will be unique in two ways. First, it is a popular song and secondly, it is a traditional bhangra song.

In Punjab, real bhangra is totally different. All these pop videos are not real bhangra. They feel they are doing bhangra but in fact it is not bhangra at all. But mine will be totally folk bhangra with folk instrumentals and folk dancers. This way I feel it will have an identity of its own.

Q. What took you so long to jump on the remix bandwagon?

A. In my fifteen year career many people suggested that I remix my songs. But I had so many songs in hand. That I never thought of remixing.

Q. Among the present generation of Punjabi pop singers, who do you think has the potential to make it to the top?

A. Bally Sagoo is not a bhangra star, but a remix singer. He started by remixing my song "Gurh nale ishq mitha" and I feel he does a good job. Daler Mehndi too is doing well for himself. Sukhbir and this new boy Jassi also have the potential to make it big.

Q. How did the Bhangra fever really catch on with the masses?

A. Earlier Punjabi songs were confined only to Punjab but as more music directors in the film industry started copying Punjabi songs like "Kale sha kala", it became a trend and if you wanted to dance, you had to have Punjabi songs. So every party, every marriage function and every disco has Punjabi bhangra songs.

Punjabi songs caught on because of Daler Mehndi producing two to three really good videos. I think after "Bolo ta ra ra" people really got hooked on to Punjabi bhangra and it swept everyone off their feet. The masses know all about "tootak tootak thootian" but they do not know who really has sung it. The song is known but the singer remains quite unknown. So we are doing this video

for everyone to know the real bhangra star.

Q. Where has the melody of old music gone when one could keep on listening to the same songs forever?

A. No one can be blamed entirely for this. Partly, it is the music companies who want to produce something catchy. No one thinks much about the melody of the song. Everyone has become very commercial. They get hold of a popular singer, make a video and with a top notch model in it, it becomes a hit. This is because nowadays with MTV and Channel V, no one wants to listen to regional folk songs. People want same MTV ishtyle videos.

Earlier we had to make two videos, one London style with lots of techno music and another with Indian drum, tabla and harmonium. But now Indians have got more modernised than any other country. Back home in London, they want more folk music. Things have changed drastically in India and people are overdoing everything. This is because Indians are seeing such things for the very first time. It's like a beggar becoming a millionaire overnight. They have gone off the rails because of so many channels around. No one is willing to take a risk by singing melodious songs. If I sing melodious songs, no one will come forward to make the video. It will not get promoted and I will be termed as an old generation singer. No one wants to be called that.

Q. How have the people outside India responded to your music and to Indian music in particular?

A. In the 25 countries I have performed so far, they still listen to melodious songs. They stress on the wordings of the songs. They are happy listening to bhangra songs. In a place like Italy where people do not understand Hindi, Punjabi or even English, they have appreciated our music. They love my music. They also love sarangi, sitar and tabla.

Q. What do you think about the present day music?

A. I feel melody will come back to music. It's like fashion. In two to three years, people will get fed up of the sameness. The root of music is melody and people will come back to it. Melody is a cultural product and it will take a full circle.

Q. Tell us something about yourself

A. I am happily married and have two daughters. I relax when I am free and have the time. But I hardly have time because I am busy writing songs and composing music. But whenever I get time, I like to watch television and read magazines.

Q. What are your expectations from this new album — Malkit Singh, Millenium Mix?

A. This album has been totally modernised and is exclusively for youngsters. Three of the songs are family-oriented, but mostly it is bhangra for the young 'uns. Youngsters in their early twenties now must have been around half the age when my "tookak tootak thootian" was released. They heard it and liked it. But now I have remixed it and made a video out of it for the first time in my fifteen year career. I would like to tell everyone that it is for them that I am remixing this song and I hope they like it. Like others I won't say that it is "hat ke" or different. Music is music and it is up to everyone to decide.

JUBILEE MUKHERJEE

'Golden Voice of Punjab'

Malkit Singh is undoubtedly the first superstar of Punjabi Bhangra. He was the 'Golden Star' who took Bhangra past the boundaries of the Indian subcontinent. His music has travelled across continents transcending cultural barriers. It appeals to the old and the young alike.

It was in Jalandhar where Malkit Singh first stepped in front of a microphone. After winning a succession of talent contests at his college he was shortlisted to represent his city at the annual Punjab State Performance. He stole the show and was presented with a symbolic golden star. This marked the birth of the **'Golden Voice of Punjab'** — as he has since been called.

Malkit made his UK debut in 1984 with his album 'Nach Gidde Wich'. He bagged the **'best newcomer', 'song of the year' and 'best Punjabi male singer'** awards and the album went on to become the biggest selling Punjabi album in history. This was followed by an album of remixed songs — "RaggaMuffin mix" which collected a platinum disc within two months of its release.

'Midas Touch', his fourteenth album received critical acclaim for its originality. The recent studio album, 'Akh Lag Gayee' has been launched in Australia, Canada, Greece and the USA.

Malkit has also collaborated with reggae/rap star Apache Indian on the hit 'Independent Girl (Sohniaye)' which appeared on Apache's new album — 'Real People'. Airplay for the single track has overtaken other songs on the album.

Malkit Singh and his Golden Star group have performed live at internationally acclaimed venues such as London's Queen Elizabeth Hall, Maple Leaf Gardens in Toronto and the National Cricket Stadium in New Delhi. He has performed in more than twenty-six countries including Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, New Zealand, Greece, Norway and Kenya. He also regularly appears on TV channels such as South Asian TV, BBC TV, STAR, MTV and VH1.

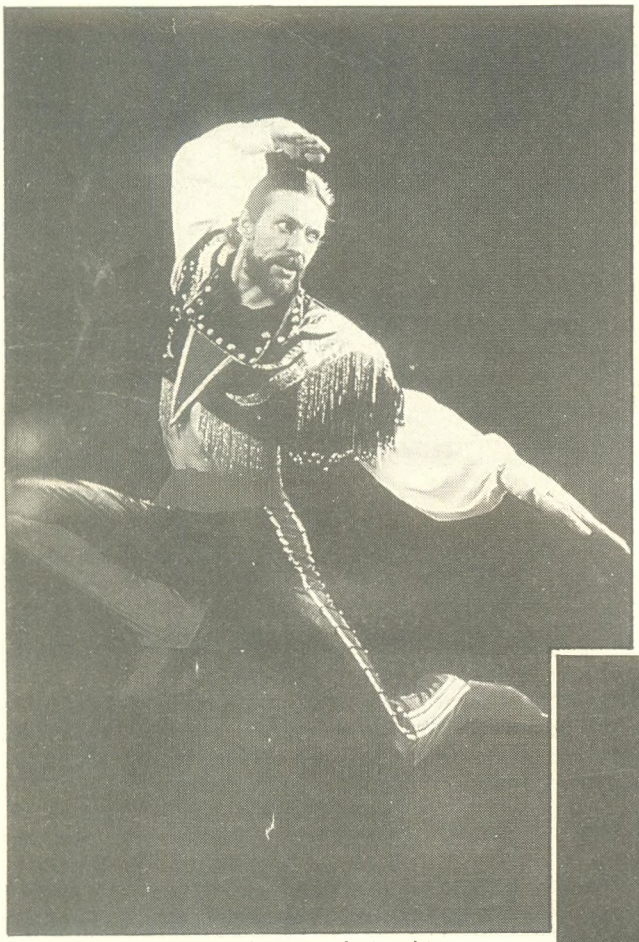
In 1997 he was given **'The Recognition of the City of Los Angeles'** award. In June 1998 Malkit Singh walked away with the **'Best Bhangra Band — 1997-98'** award at the Asian Music and Media Awards in the UK.

Dazzling spectacle on Hot Ice

It was a dazzling spectacle on ice and it certainly took your breath away. A once-in-a-lifetime experience as rarely does one see ballet on ice in India in hot weather and that too such a superb performance. The world renowned Igor Bobrin's troupe of twenty-five artistes including their star performers, former Olympic champion ice skaters Natalia Bestemianova and Andrei Bukin have been giving shows in Mumbai every day since February 27 and will be performing till March 10 at the Vallabhai Patel Stadium in Mumbai. They were a hit in New Delhi and Bangalore where they performed earlier. This is the troupe's first visit to India.

The first half of the show was dancing to the classical compositions by old masters like Mozart and Tchaikovsky. The choreography was excellent and the dancers in their colourful costumes moved effortlessly on ice with grace, dexterity and speed to the strains of soulful music. And the superb lighting effects making patterns on ice added to the spectacle.

Former world champion ice skaters from Russia perform brilliantly at their show 'Hot Ice' in Mumbai



Olympic Champion ice skater Andrei Bukin enthralling the Mumbai audience.

In the second half, the music was more popular with dancers twisting, rocking and rolling and jiving to hit numbers of 50's and 60's such as 'Only

These skaters danced gracefully and it was a treat watching them.

You', '16 Tons,' 'Rock Around The Clock' and other nostalgic numbers. They even ballet danced on their roller skates to a popular Hindi number selected by choreographer Igor simply because he liked the rhythm and felt it would go well with a ballet on ice. In between the dances, there was a fabulous laser show with the colourful laser beams dancing to the beat of the music and encircling the entire audience. It was a treat. And then there was jugglery on ice which was absolutely breathtaking. The show ended on a very Indian note with the ice skaters dancing to the beat of the Vande Mataram and bearing Indian flags.

The performers are all very talented. Natalia, who has been skating on ice since the age of five, has won five golds in the European championships, four golds in the World championship and an Olympic gold. Andrei, another champion skater with a near similar medal tally has been Natalia's figure skating partner since the past 22 years, starting from the time they were amateurs. The pair turned professional when there were no more medals to win.

Despite the initial technical glitches the troupe faced of putting up an ice rink with weather hotting up, 'Hot Ice' which was presented by Clinic All Clear and organised by Sky Entertainment was a show worth going miles for. The choreography was superb, the music great, lighting brilliant and the performers fantastic!

I.G.

It was Bliss all the way

BLISS: are a 5 "man" band who strum their own guitars, play their own instruments, write their own lyrics, and basically do their own thing. They produce a refreshing sound with an 80's feel, with music from the present decade much in conjunction with a radio friendly act. Their album of pop/rock songs fills the void left by bands like Michael Learns To Rock.

Fronted by singer, songwriter and guitarist, Scott McGinley, **BLISS** have now been concentrating their efforts in Asia for over a year, and are now beginning to reap the rewards. They have been on tours in Thailand, Singapore, Phillipines, Malaysia and other Asian countries. Their success has been heartening and their live gigs have earned them millions of fans all over Asia.

BLISS came to India with much apprehension and hope. Their fears proved to be unfounded as the Indian. audiences welcomed them and sang with them. **BLISS** performed on the 27th and 29th of January in Mumbai at the Ambassador Hotel, and drew rave responses from the audience. The multi-faceted, multi-talented band played their instruments and sang live, switching with ease and dexterity between ballads such as 'Tonight, Tonight' and 'Cry, Baby Cry' to the more rockish and uptempo 'Baby He Loves You'.

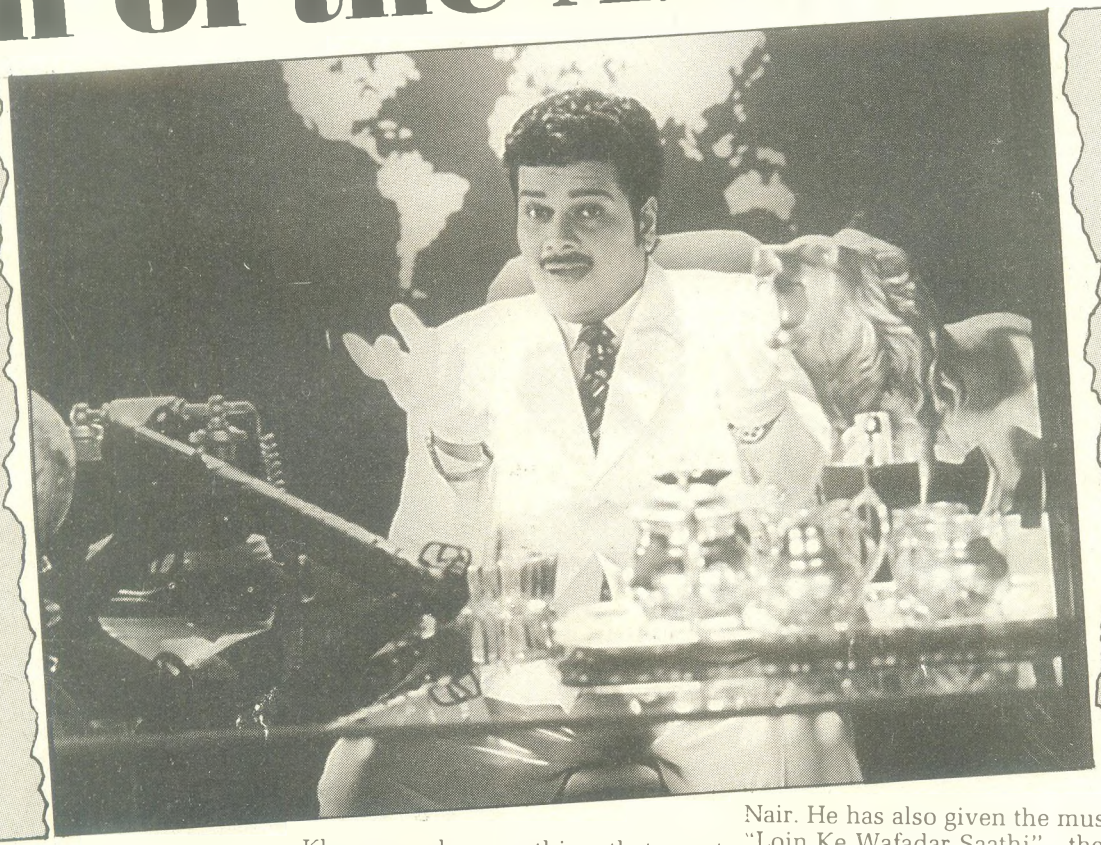
BLISS went on to perform to a crowd of 13,000 strong at Calcutta for the Channel [V] roadshow on the 31st, and the crowd was enthralled by their live and energitic performance, singing to 'Baby He Loves You' and other songs. The applause as they finished was truly deafening.

A brief word on the band: it is comprised of Scott McGinley on guitars, John Ormond on lead guitars, Patrick Mc Cabe on keyboards, Alan Brown on drums and Tony Grey on bass guitar. Produced by the legendary Keith Olsen, the man behind such successful artistes as Fleetwood Mac, Foreigner, Heart, Reo Speedwagon and Pat Benatar, **BLISS**'s 14-track album mixes refreshing, catchy pop songs with original hits such as 'Baby He Loves You', (currently on rotation on Channel [V] and MTV), 'Even if You Go' and ballads like 'Love That Never Dies' and 'Cry, Baby Cry' with cover versions of the BeeGees' 'Run To Me', Tears For Fears' 'Everybody Wants To Rule The World' and others.

Released in India by The Gramophone Company of India Ltd. (HMV), BLISS are now on their way towards success.

Bliss performing at the Ambassador Hotel

Tete-a-tete with Asli son of the Asli Loin



Shehzad Khan, son of one of Bollywood's greatest character actors, the late Hamid Ali Khan alias Ajit features in BMG Crescendo's "The Asli Loin Mix - Baap of `Aal' Mixes" a hilarious spoof of Ajit, who was better known for his roles as "The Loin" (Lion) in `Kallicharan' and Teja in `Zanjheer' and `Yaadon Ki Bharat'. The album is probably the closest anybody could get to the real baap of all the villains and why not, Shehzad is the (asli) son of the (asli) Loin himself.

To support the album, there is an equally funny video which has all the Loin's sidekicks such as Tony (on his pony), Peter (on his two-seater), Michael (on his bicycle) and of course, Lilee (don't be silly) and Mona Darling.

Speaking to UPBEAT, Shehzad Khan reveals everything that went into the making of this unusual and incredibly funny album that would have its listeners dying of laughter.

Q. What is this 'Asli Loin Mix' all about?

A. "The Asli Loin Mix" is a tribute to my dad Mr. Ajit. I have been working on this for last one and a half years. In fact, this thought was in my mind much before the "Gabbar Mix". But somehow it could not happen at that time. but things really started happening when I was doing a show for MTV in mid-1997. Incidentally, I met Suresh Thomas and Bashir Sheikh of BMG Crescendo at a party they had thrown in honour of the VJs of MTV. The show had a fantastic response and that's when this idea came to me. Then I started working on the script and things started happening.

The music is arranged by Santosh Nair. He has also given the music for "Loin Ke Wafadar Saathi" - the song which I have sung myself. There other video is featuring me in my dad's get-up.

Q. How have people been reacting to this video album ?

A. I have seen that people are liking this video a lot. Can you imagine a writer like Shobha De has praised my video album in one of her columns in Sunday Midday. She says it is one of the best music albums and she wants to see a series of it. So I am really touched. I am very happy and thankful to God that he has made this happen. I am delighted to see these songs are being played in taxis and rickshaws.

Q. Does being the son of Ajit pose any difficulty for you?

A. It's more of an advantage than a disadvantage. Being the son of such a big celebrity makes things easier for me. Like anywhere I go, anyone I

want to meet, it's just a matter of few seconds. Other people have to wait for hours in a queue. Today I can meet the Prime Minister of India also. I just have to send him a chit or just call him. I am very lucky that I am the son of Ajit. I think he is the only celebrity who has got a website. He's the only celebrity whose jokes are so famous.

Q. People must be having a lot of expectations from you. How do you cope with that?

A. People do have a lot of expectations from me. I try to cope with them by doing my best. Take this album for instance. At first people were very sceptical about it. But things started happening. In fact, my people at home except my dad were doubtful. At first, it wasn't a tribute. I just wanted to make it. Then later on when I lost my father, it was released as a tribute to him. In fact, if my father had been alive, he would have definitely got featured in the video. He was very positive about the whole project.

Q. Tell us something about your acting career.

A. A major film of mine was "Andaz Apna Apna" with Aamir and Salman and directed by Rajkumar Santoshi. I am doing one more movie with Rajkumarji starring Aamir and Shahrukh. I am doing a serial called "Hadh Kar di aapne" on Zee TV which is again a major one. And there will be more movies coming in a short while.

Q. Are you going in for a bad guy's role ?

A. I want to be a good character actor, be it negative or positive. It can be a comedy or even a tragedy. I just want to be known as a good character actor. Then it is up to the public how they accept me. But I feel people like to see me more in comic roles.

Q. Did you from the very beginning have this kind of expectation from "Loin Mix" ?

A. Of course. I have great expectations. It's just the beginning. I am expecting it to be a bumper hit.

Q. Do you have plans for more albums ?

A. Of course, why not. But it will be totally different from this.

Q. Tell us something about yourself.

A. My background is a very open one. I come from the family of an actor. And I am married. I have a 31/2 year old son. I have a very good-looking wife and I really adore her.

Q. How do you relax ?

A. My favourite pastime is reading. I do a lot of reading. If I get bored, I go to my club and play squash. I also like to swim. Or else, whenever I get time off for one or two days, I take my family to Khandala or Lonavala.

Q. What has been your source of inspiration ?

A. My dad. And I remember when I was 13 to 14 years old, there was one pop singer who made a big splash on the scene. She was Nazia Hasan. I used to be a great fan of hers and I still am. And from that time onwards, I had a desire to come out with an album of my own. But as it is, I used to underestimate myself. I knew I would get a chance in movies but very much doubted coming out with an album. But God has fulfilled this wish of mine.

Q. But why do you imitate your father ?

A. I don't imitate my father. Actually a man is known for the company he keeps. I am known because I used to be with my father. And don't you think I resemble my father very much. I am the only son of his who resembles him so much. And more than that I have my father's personality.

Q. What about the voice ?

A. (A burst of laughter) Aah Raha Sawaal voice ka! See I am talking to you normally, (Switches to his dad Ajit's voice) Now I can be abnormal with you also. It's very natural with me. It doesn't take a second. It is the voice box which is that way. So you see it's God's gift.

Q. What are your plans for the future ?

A. I am very soon getting into production. I want to produce films, serials, shows and such like. I want to be an actor and producer.

Q. Did you face any problems during the making of this album ?

A. No. By the grace of God, things, have been going so smooth with BMG Crescendo. I had no problems at all. They got me the best of directors, Ajay and Sameer. I got whatever I wanted according to my script. I got the best music directors, lyricsts, everything was the best. BMG-Crescendo gave me an open hand and I could do whatever I wanted till I was satisfied.

Q. Did anything funny happen during the shooting of the video ?

A. The best incident that occured is that on the very first day of the shoot of "Loin Mix", everything was arranged. The set was put up and everybody had arrived. But incidently, Robert was not there. Everyone was in a fix. Coincidentally, I had my brother-in-law with me. So I requested him to play the role of Robert. The poor guy had never faced the camera before in his life. He said he didn't know anything about acting. I told him to do exactly what the director said and he was pretty good.

The guy in Dharmendra's role is also good. Actually I wanted Dharamji to do the role at first. But somehow he didn't want to do a music video. So I didn't change my concept. And I think whatever happens, happens for the best. The actor has come out excellent. He is the only person after me who has got noticed in the entire video.

JUBILEE MUKHERJEE

It all started with the sexy Spice Girls. The girl bands became a rage. Then came the All Saints. And now it's B*Witched, the four Irish gals who've been topping the charts and are hot, hot, all over the world. The good news is that they may even come to India soon and liven things up for our desi youth.

"We are four girls who happen to be in a band together." say B*Witched. "We don't want to be one dimensional. We don't want to be about one thing. We want to be about everything. We want B*Witched to be nothing less than a celebration of being alive."

Their debut album B*Witched-all about magic, spells and enchantment, hit music stores in India on 22nd January '99.

They're about as lively and lovely as it gets right now. Fizzier than a vat full of lemonade. They're B*Witched. Four multi-talented girls from Dublin. Who have single-handedly breathed fresh life into the pop charts. "We're more interested in bringing joy into people's lives than becoming incredibly famous," they say. With the incredible chart

B*WITCHED ON A ROLLERCOASTER RIDE

success of their first two singles - the instantly infectious "C'est La Vie" and "Rollercoaster" - they look set to do both.

The roots of B*Witched extend back a long way. All the way back to Dublin where, in the early eighties, twin sisters Edele and Keavy discovered a mutual love of music. "We come from a musical family," they say, "So there was always music around us when we were growing up. Our grandad played the fiddle, so we never needed much of an excuse to dance and sing. From a really early age, we started making up our own songs and performing them. I suppose, at some point, it occured to us that we might grow up to be performers. But it seemed like a distant dream. Then, as we got older, it started looking more realistic. We thought, `Yeah, we can do this'". It was at that point that things started falling into place.

All they needed now was to recruit a couple of kindred spirits. Those potential team mates were out there somewhere, harbouring similar dreams of pop stardom. All that was required was a few simple twists of fate to bring B*Witched together.

Like the twins, Sinead had been involved in music from a tender age - playing piano from the age of seven

and going on to study dance and performance. One morning, she wandered into the Dublin garage where Keavy was working as a part-time mechanic. The two girls bonded immediately and the B*Witched line-up was three-quarters of the way to making up the full coven.....

Enter Lindsay who was already an accomplished musician, having learned the piano at seven and the guitar at thirteen. She met up with Keavy at a kick-boxing class and, bingo, B*Witched were ready to cast their collective spell.

Inspired by the success of the twins' brother Shane (a member of Boyzone, no less), the four girls decamped to Sinead's Dublin flat where, for months on end, they buckled down to writing songs and singing into a cheap tape recorder.

"Right from the start," Sinead recalls, "we just seemed to hit it off, both musically and socially. But we didn't want to hurry anything. We knew we had something good going, but we wanted to take our time with it. Between the four of us, we had all these different musical influences, everything from hip hop to pop, from soul to traditional Irish folk. And we wanted to take all our influences, absorb them, and create something that was entirely our own."

Most animated debut singles

The release of "C'est La Vie" made for a boldly spirited start. A sublime slice of contemporary music, which incorporates elements of soul and Irish jiggery, it stands out as one of the most animated debut singles in recent memory. The kind of song which wastes no time in burrowing into the listener's subconscious and refusing to budge. A storming debut, so it is. And the start of an exciting new pop adventure.

"It's a song that could be interpreted in a number of different ways," Edele continues. "But we see it as a kind of modern fairy tale - a song about being young and innocent. Which is pretty much how we feel at this time in our lives. All the stuff we write is based on our own experience. We are writing songs from the viewpoint of late-teenagers. We're cheeky and we're giddy on life. But we're not Bad Girls. We just believe in enjoying life to the max and we want to get that feeling over in our songs."

"If we've got a message in our music, it's basically, `Live your life to the full' That's essentially what we're about."

B*Witched have proved that they can craft music of top-notch quality. Having toured with Boyzone and 911, they have proved beyond doubt that they can also cut the mustard on stage - turning in the kind of juiced-up performances that have had excited audiences hollering for more. Right now, they look like they've got the world by the tail. Full of zest and radioactive with self-belief, it seems that B*Witched can do no wrong.

"We don't really think about limits," says Keavy. "We're just busy enjoying the ride at the moment. We totally believe in what we do. We totally believe in the power of pop music to raise people's spirits. And that's exactly what we intend to do - raise people's spirits and make them feel more alive. If our music can do that, then we're achieving our ambition."

B*Witched are certainly on target to do just that. "C'est La Vie" went straight into the UK charts at No. 1, outselling every other single by nearly double. They are the seventh act to achieve this accolade and they are also the youngest girl group ever to have a number one.

"C'est La Via" notched up 9 weeks in the Top Ten and has sold over 800,000 copies. Since their two week reign at No. 1 in the UK, B*Witched have left Europe spellbound. "C'est La Vie" reached No. 1 in Ireland and New Zealand and was a huge hit in Australia. B*Witched are the first girl band to debut at No. 1 with their first single.

A ride of musical highs

Their second single, the instantly memorable "Rollercoaster" is just that - a ride of musical highs, and in true B*Witched style - instantly memorable. It is accompanied by a stunning video that sees the girls flying around the world (literally). The single crashed straight into the UK charts at No. 1, making B*Witched the second new act (after Robson & Jerome) in chart history to debut at No. 1 with their first two singles.

Their debut Top 3 album B*Witched' has been certified double platinum, and showcases Edele, Keavy, Lindsay and Sinead's extreme and undeniable talents as pop artists. Working alongside producer/co-writer Ray Hedges (the band co-wrote nine of the twelve tracks), the album is full of surprises - classic pop songs and haunting acoustic ballads.

Their haunting third single 'To You I Belong', stormed straight into the charts at No. 1. They are the seventh act in chart history to have a hat-trick of number ones.

B*Witched's fourth single 'Blame It On The Weatherman' - to be released on March 8,looks set to follow their other three singles to the top of the charts. The girls have always had an affinity with this song. The dramatic pizzicato string and timpani from an orchestra superbly frame Edele's lead vocals.

B*Witched, are currently enjoying their worldwide success on a sold-out tour in America with N-Sync.

Here are some excerpts from a recent interview with this bewitchingly successful band.

Do you feel like stars now?

Sometimes, but we don't think we're really famous yet! You forget people might know you, so it can be really weird to see people staring at you in restaurants and places. But we're having a ball, we really are.

What happened when you found out 'C'est La Vie' was number one in Britain?

We were with our producer and our managers at the time. When they told us, we thought it was a joke. We started crying,then we started laughing, and then we'd go really quiet. That evening we were in Southampton on stage and Dr. Fox from Capital Radio made the announcement to the 60,000 people in the audience. We gasped,then went mad, and it was so funny, cause the crowd enjoyed it as much as we did!

What's been your fave performance?

I really enjoyed the very first Top Of The Pops we did in Britain because it's so famous. It really lived up to our dreams. We were quite confident though we're always a little bit nervous when we perform, but we said our little prayer and gave each other a hug before going on. But watching the Top 20 countdown was nerve-wracking. We knew we were top of the pops, but we thought there might have been some change. It was weird and exciting!

Do you remember the first autograph you signed?

I think we'd been in the paper just once and we'd come to England for the first time. There was this guy on the train and he looked at us and said. 'Are you that new band?' And we said, 'Yeah!!!' We were so excited. I can even remember his name!

Sinead

B*Witching Facts

Did you know.....

★ Sony Music UK's Head of Epic, was knocked out when he first heard B*Witched's *C'est La Vie* and Rollercoaster (this was even before the band was signed on by the record company). He immediately played it to the company's entire Europe operations. Fowler was convinced this band would become a huge hit. This prediction about the hit potential was proved right with C'est La Vie and Rollercoaster entering the charts at number 1 in the UK - a feat never before achieved by any artist, from the Beatles to the Spice Girls!

★ B*Witched got the best Top 40 start - the first time for a new act in the entire history of both CBS and Sony. The rest is history...

charted at the top in New Zealand

new entry at 7 in Italy

top 10 in Australia and Belgium

top 20 in Sweden and Norway

top 40 in Denmark and Netherlands and at the top on many more charts in the US, Japan etc. etc.

★ They have B*Witched everyone across the seas. There is some talk of them coming to Asia. India??

★ Edele, Keavy, Sinead and Lindsay form the B*Witched band. They hail from Dublin. How did they get their name - B*Witched? Perky popsters, their band name was actually picked by their producer. How? It appears he kept telling them "you're very bewitching" and the name got stuck!

★ What do B*Witched and Boyzone have in common? Edele and Keavy, the lovable twins from B*Witched have an older brother- Boyzone's Shane Lynch! Which means the two bands are related. So much for Irish charisma!

What have you learnt about the others?

I think we knew each other quite well before all this started. We were aware that if things took off, we'd need to be really, really close. We're always there for each other and now we're even closer, which is nice!

I've learnt that they're good friends and that I wouldn't want to do this with anyone else!

'C'est La Vie', is it your motto?

Yeah, kind of. Just take life as it comes and live it to the full. No matter what happens, you've just got to say, 'c'est la vie'. That's life.

What happens happens.

Basically, the way that we look at things is that everything happens for a reason.

How come your music's so 'pop'? Ireland isn't really known for that type of music.

While we have bands like U2 and acts like that, as

far as the pop and commercial worlds, nobody had been doing anything for years — I think the Nolan Sisters were the last Irish act to have a real pop sound. But then Boyzone came along and opened the doors for everybody. There's a fierce amount of talent all around the whole of Ireland and the world is just beginning to see it now. And we're part of it!

What's with the Irish dancing in the video?

I used to do Irish dancing when I was a little wee one. I did it for six or seven years and I used to do all the competitions.

Myself and Keavy used to do Irish dancing when we were kids too, but only for a couple of weeks, like. So Sinead taught us the bit in the video.

I'd never danced it before.

But she's very good.

So we can hold Sinead responsible!

Sort of. We were working with the choreographer and he thought it was appropriate to put the Irish dancing in the video as well, so I worked out some steps and showed him the Steps' 'vocabulary' and he worked it in.

Were you a super competitive Irish dancer when you were a kid?

No, I wasn't but I did do the all-Ireland competition and went abroad with it as well. I wasn't champion or anything because I didn't stay at it long enough. Had it been really competitive, I wouldn't have enjoyed it so much. I've always been in it just because I wanted to do it.

How come you ended up in B*Witched and not in Riverdance?

I wasn't a champion Irish dancer that's why. Riverdance is extremely hard: you start off doing soft-shoe dancing and as you go along you enter competitions and when you win that dance you go on to a harder dance and harder, and harder ones. Then the hardest of them all are in hard shoes. And that's at the top level, and I didn't get to the top level.

Are you always going to keep that Irish sound in your music?

Yeah, as our music develops, the Irish music will always be with us because we wanted something with a bit of individuality, and also it tells everyone something about where we're from.

With all the girl groups around at the moment, everyone's going to say you're... Another one!

And what do you say to that?

Pop go the nail enamels!

The all-girl teenage Irish band 'B*Witched* have set the pop charts on fire with their self-titled debut album which hit music stores in India on January 22. To celebrate the launch of the album, Elle 18 has launched, for the first time in India, a range of nail enamel inspired by and named after this all-girl band. Elle 18's B*Withced nail enamel, a set of four funky and sparkling shades are imbued with the spirit of the popular, all-girl, band. Make-up and music, what a mega hit mix!

The group's music and style, that is full of fun, spark and youthful magic, was the inspiration for Elle 18's new, wacky shades. The four shades match the individual personality of the girls, and hence each shade bears one of their names: Linds, Keaves, Eddie and Socky.

Elle 18 'B*Witched Linds' is a white nail enamel with cool blue sparkles. 'B*Witch-ed Keaves' is a completely new concept - a clear nail enamel with blue hologram sparkles. 'B*Witched Eddie' is a magical duo tone effect in mauve. 'B'Witched Socky' is a sparkling brown nail enamel.

Linds, one of the band members, said, "Keaves, Socky, Eddie and I are thrilled to have nail enamel named after us. And these colours are soooo cool, absolutely magical."

This tie-up is in keeping with the brand's strategy and continuing efforts to identify with its unique youth segment. Music has a very strong influence on Indian youth and their lifestyle; and Elle 18 wants to promote the genre of music most appreciated by its consumers. The music and style of B*Witched reflects the same fresh, youthful appeal of Elle 18, and their songs have variations that range from hip hop to pop and from soul to folk.

Elle 18 B*Witched nail enamels are available at cosmetics counters across the country, priced at Rs. 31 per bottle. Each purchase comes with a free Elle 18 B*Witched thumb ring.

Elle 18 has developed merchandise material and a continuous programme of activities to support the launch of B*Witched nail enamel. Elle 18 also plans to bring the band to India soon. A television campaign on MTV and other channels and a special press campaign in leading women's publications will be accompanied by a host of B*Witched events to be held at colleges throughout this month.

Elle 18 was launched in January 1996. Aimed to address the grooming needs and aspirations of Indian youth, Elle 18 has grown to be one of India's largest selling range of youth colour cosmetics. With 32 exotic shades in lipstick and nail enamel, 4 shades in eye pencil and two variations in perfume and body spray, Elle 18 offers cosmetics which reflect the moods of young women - from fresh and pleasing to wild and wacky - whatever the fashion trend and individual's style.

Eddie, Socky, Keaves and Linds are B*Witched - four multitalented girls aged 17 to 19 years, from Dublin, Ireland. They are vivacious, trendy, wild and wacky, depicting good clean teenage fun through their songs and videos which are in tune with today's young women, all over the world.

B*Witched is a Sony Music artist.

A lot of people have said they can't compare us to any other girl band out there.

I think it's due to our music.

We do Irish hip-hop poppers!

We play instruments as well: Sinead plays the bass guitar and the piano; I play the guitar and piano as well and Edele plays the flute. Keavy plays the sax and a bit of the drums and guitar as well.

At the end of the day, we are a girl band, but we're getting to be known as the first tomboy band ever. We had a write-up that said while the Spice Girls have sex, All Saints coolness, we have spirit and energy.

You've already been on tour with boy bands Boyzone and 911 and done radio, nightclubs and school tours too — which was your favourite?

The school tour was my favourite because we got to meet the kids who are gonna buy our music. And that was nice 'cause sometimes kids tend to think you're not real!

It was nice to know how happy you're making kids feel. There was one particular boy who hadn't read or written in months. We went into the school and when he went back to the class, all the kids were writing letters to us saying, 'Oh, you were brilliant!' and he wrote about eight sentences in two minutes flat with perfect spellings and grammar. His teacher was on a high!

And our name was on the front of Wembley Arena already! When we supported 911.

Do people think you got the gig with Boyzone because Keavy and Edele are sisters to Shane in the group?

We actually, didn't get the gig like that! We decided we wouldn't be cheeky enough to ask, but we were on a TV show at home in Ireland and Boyzone's management happened to be on the same programme and they hadn't seen us before. They watched us performing on TV from their dressing room, then came down and said 'that was absolutely amazing!' They asked us to support Boyzone live on national television — so it's there on tape! It was so much better to be asked than turning around and asking.

How was it for you supporting boy bands?

It was really good, like. Amazing! It was really exciting getting to know new bands, but it's quite sad in a way because you spend ten days with these people, get to know them, have a laugh and they become your friends and then you have to move on. And not see them for months afterwards.

But we keep bumping into Ultra on the school tours and some television that we've done and on the road! **Sinead:** They were just walking along Kensington High Street in London.

And we were hanging out the car window! It was just after our launch and we were just so excited telling them everything. Then we got back in the car and you could see them looking at each other, thinking 'What the hell was that all about?'

Have any of Boyzone or 911's fans got all bitchy on you?

No, not at all. We even had a few banners.

Our first one was in Cardiff on the first night with 911. We were like, 'Look, look!' and by the end of the tour, I think we ended up with four banners.

What does Shane think of your success?

He thinks it's great that we're doing what we always wanted to do, but at the same time he always warned us that we were gonna get tired and it was going to be hard work. But we knew that from watching him anyway, and it didn't put us off because this is all we ever wanted to do.

And is there a 'special' link betwen you and Boyzone?

We wouldn't call them up or anything like that, but the boys are really nice and we chat away to them when we see them.

I don't think it actually hit us how big they are until we went to see them at Wembley last year we just burst into tears. It only hit us then that Shane was in the biggest boy band around at the minute. But we don't look at him any differently, 'cause he's still our brother and at the end of the day we love him and he just happens to be doing a public job.

Glam Rocks

Featured here are the sultry, sexy styles of the Seventies. It's not retro but highlights the way that the slick simplicity of the clothes of that era-a skimpy satin dress for example or a column decorated with diamante-strikes a chord with the here and now. The sleek chic look of the Seventies is updated to play a starring role for evening; sharp trouser-suits, sexy flashes of spangle and shimmer and cleavage-baring dresses that would have wowed them on the dance floor.

The rock-chick look that hits all the right notes: the navel-deep cleavage of a black column dress emphasised with diamante

A ruffled red waistcoat teamed with a slim red slit skirt

Straight-cut trousers teamed with a black velvet jacket with sharp cream lapels

Elements of Victorian dress eroticised - the cape, the corset - by using them to top a rubberised lace skirt. Black lacy-knit sweater. Black and copper laceskirt.

Roye's Designer Gown of the Millenium

Pic. Suresh Stevens

The fashion designer very much in the news is Seema Roye who recently won the 'Femina Designer Gown of the Millenium' Award for the fabulous evening gown for Yukta,the winner of the prestigious 'Miss India 1999 (World)' title. The millenium gown was inspired by the Aryan concept of 'Panch Dhatu' or the potent combination of five metals, each contributing its intrinsic essence and signifying the five outstanding qualities of the woman of the new millenium — Gold for power and beauty; silver for purity and sophistication; brass for independence; iron for strength and copper for simplicity. The main fabric employed was tissue and organza interlaced in an unconventional manner, recreating ethnic magic. Fascinating indeed!

Yukta in Roye's Designer Gown of the Millenium

Seema Roye with her award-winning creation displayed by Yukta.

And now Roye is busy creating the day-to-day wear for Yukta keeping in mind her phenomenal height.

The Femina Best Designer Award comes on the heels of Roye's recent and globally acknowledged achievement of having solely designed the entire winning wardrobe for the newly crowned Miss India Worldwide 1999 -- Ms. Melissa Ritu Bhagat.

A strapless petrol-blue silk-satin jumpsuit is suspended from a band of sequins

A one-shouldered sliver of black satin will provide plenty of party action

BIBA Valentine launch

Wednesday, February 3, was no ordinary day for customers at the Shopper's Stop at Andheri. There was a live gig, some of the most beautiful women and a range of some of the most vibrant and exciting salwar kameezes on display. It was the start of the BIBA Valentine extravaganza.

There was the lissome Helen Brodie of 'Monsoon' fame, and Rakshanda Khan (who has launched a host of products including the Kit Kat), among eight of the country's leading models who triggered off the BIBA Valentine week at the Shoppers Stop. Never ever has the leading shopping store looked so deserted on its mezzanine floor as it did on Wednesday as customers flocked like bees to a flower on the first floor where BIBA created a history of sorts by launching their brand in a manner that could be a precedent for other brands to follow.

The launch took off on a hip-hop note with two of the city's most promising and talented singers, Rajeev Bandodkar and Santosh Shetty, basically a dance choreographer, enacting a short play of two janitors cleaning up the entrance to a shop whose entrance was designed in the shape of a heart. Bored and sweaty, the two are suddenly stunned by the sudden appearance of two stunning women in salwar kameezes in colours that were not only attractive and rare but cut to fit every curve of their body.

Their day having brightened, Rajeev then broke off into the chart-busting hip-hop song of the 60s, Be-bop-a-lula she's my baby, Be-bop-a-lula the only baby... and was joined in by Santosh Shetty. The duo rocked the crowd before the models took over with BIBA outfits that were designed for every occasion.

There was Helen Brodie, Rakshanda Khan, Zahira Lakdawala, Shaheen Khan, Shonali Rozario of Chambor fame and twins Tapur and Tupur Chatterjee who had the audience guessing whether they were clones or blood-sisters.

BIBA Valentine form February 3 onwards is packed with gifts galore from BIBA and Chambor, the Geneva based cosmetics company. 50 early bird prizes for every day of the week, apart from gift hampers and free grooming sessions from Chambor were part of the excitement.

The BIBA salwar kameezes are available in some of the leading stores across 25 cities, apart from Singapore and Dubai. "Valentine's Day has turned out to be a commercial success in India and I thought it best to officially launch my brand collection during the Valentine week as it has mass appeal and suits the pockets of one and all," said Sanjay Bindra, director of BIBA.

The event, including the fashion show choreography was organised by one of Mumbai's leading fashion choreographer Elric D'Souza in association with PromoBiz, the event and talent management company.

BIBA trendy salwar-kameez displayed at Valentine extravaganza.

SLIPPING AWAY

RICHARD MARX

I said I wouldn't cry
The day you say goodbye
It's not like I'll never see you again
I guess the things you need
You just can't get from me
But you still can reach out to me now and then

My head is spinning round
All my defenses down
I have held the world in my hands
But I can't keep you from slipping away

If time will show me grace
And you to a better place
Then I can live knowing it wasn't in vain
It hurts so much to know
When love means letting go
And no one can tell me that they've felt my pain

No strength can stop you now
Will someone show me how
How to live it over again
'Cause I can't keep you from slipping away

I will never break your power over me
I could never shake the thought of you
Burning in my mind, you're all I see

My head is spinning 'round
All my defenses down
I have held the world in my hands
But I can't keep you from slipping away
No, I can't keep you from slipping away

BIRDSEYE

TONY RICH

Stepped in the club alone at Atlanta Live
Hat tilted to one side
I watch her body, in phase
Platinum eyes like in department stores, she's curious, of course
"You'll be mine, one day," I said

If we could sometimes just go out
With margaritas, drink greyhounds
Don't quite like dancing. Too cool
But I could sense her class in a magazine
She looks just like Halle, I found it, I know I found love

Now I know love can be true
When I saw you in bird's eye view
Baby, I found love
Girl, you define love

Now Girdy's girls the kind to play around
Don't wanna make her frown
She'll bring her laundry to bed
And every day she finds a sunny cloud
It sort of makes me smile, she's so dramatically free

I'd like to show you my new house
I've seen us makin' on my couch
You'd dig the bathtub, for sure
So I baptized her in the bubble bath
She came out screaming mad, oh what a laugh
'Cause she still had Halle's eyes

I'd take the A-train to bother you
Oh she said
She thinks it's all good
Don't matter what your body do
Oh cool, I'm cool
She thinks I'm cool

SAY YOU LOVE ME

SIMPLY RED

Being one of those grains of sand
I get blown all around the world
And what I make of it
Oh I don't know
What's the meaning of it
Oh I don't know

I've been around so many times
that the world's turning in my mind
What do I think of it
Oh it's so so

What more can you be than the things they say you've been

Say you love me all around the world
Stay and hug me all around the world
Be yours a boy or be mine a girl
Just say you love me
Just say you love me

I never ever realised
It's so easy to make you cry
But did I break a bit
Oh I hope no
Have you forgot about it
Oh I hope so

But you never ever wonder why
In every single pair of eyes
There is a hunger in it
Or its soul dies

What more can you be than the things they say you've been

Say you love me all around the world
Stay and hug me all around the world

SISTER MORPHINE

ROLLING STONES

Here I lie in my hospital bed
Tell me, Sister Morphine,
When are you comin' round again ?
Oh I don't think I could wait that long
Oh. you see that I'm not that strong

Be yours a boy or be mine a girl

Say you love me all around the world
Stay and hug me all around the world
Be yours a boy or be mine a girl
Just say you love me

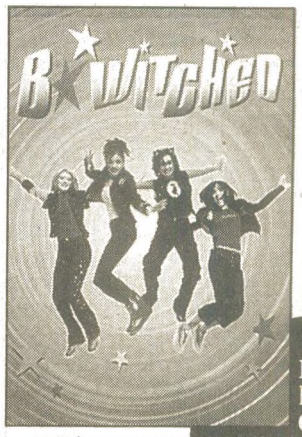
Come on now darling say you love me
Oh yeah, please please say you love me
Come on say you love me

The scream of the ambulance is soundin' in my ear
Tell me, Sister Morphine,
how long have I been lyin here
What am I doing in this place ?
Why does the doctor have no face ?
Oh, I can't crawl across the floor
Can't you see, Sister Morphine.
I'm just trying to score

Well it just goes to show things
are not what they seem
Please, Sister Morphine.
turn my nightmare into dream
Oh. can't you see I'm fading fast
And that this shot will be my last

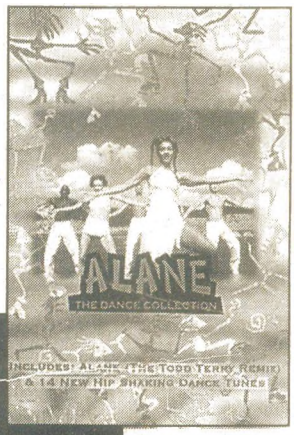
Please Cousin Cocaine.
lay your cool hands on my head
Come on Sister Morphine you better make up my bed
'Cos you know and I know in the morning I'll be dead
And you can sit around and watch
all the clean white sheets stain red

B★WITCHED



Including hits like C'est La vie, Rollercoaster and many many more

ALANE



Including the smash hit Alane and 14 new hip-shaking dance tunes

SHAWN MULLINS

Best Pop Vocal Performance Male - Grammy Nominee Album features the hit song "Lullaby" and more

CDs and Cassettes available on Sony Music

UB40 Comes to Town

Unemployment is generally considered to be a dreaded curse, a sign of ill-luck and often the reason behind the mental anxiety, tension and resulting frustrations of the young adults. But to a couple of lads from Birmingham in the U.K., the very word unemployment came as a blessing in disguise. It was simply unemployment that led the boys to taking up something they were good at, making Reggae Music.

In the next six months, following gruelling rehearsals in a basement the band was already playing the local circuit, going by the name of UB40. The title according to Ali Campbell, being inspired by an unemployment form. "UB basically stands for Unemployment Benefit and 40 pound sterling is the dole amount," elaborates Ali Campbell.

Incidentally, the band unlike many others didn't have to wait for too long before success came knocking on their door in the form of British radio legend John Peel. Very impressed by the band in their music, he featured them on his prestigious, national broadcast show in January 1980. The track from the same broadcast, **King/Food For Thought** became a top 5 smash hit in England in February 1980. "We're still not sure whether it was the Martin Luther inspired **King** or its flip side **Food For Thought** that sold the record, any way whichever of the two did, it shot us to fame, relates percussionist/vocalist Norman Lamont Hassan, reminiscing about their first ever hit.

By 1981, following the release of the band's debut albums, **Present Arms and Present Arms in Dub**, their popularity began to grow steadily in London. Popularity that could be attributed to a few elements of the band, "it was basically each band member's multi-racial lineage (although British citizens, the band members roots can be traced to places as diverse as Yemen, Ireland and Jamaica), the odd band name and an unorthodox Reggae sound featuring soft melodies, smooth vocals and smooth brass arrangements that were responsible for our success back then, says rhythm guitarist Robin Campbell.

It was only in 1983, that UB40 announced their arrival world-wide with the release of album, **Labour of Love**. One of its singles, a cover of the Neil Diamond track, **Red Red Wine** soared straight through the roof and topped all the existing British pop charts. Five years down the line, it gave the band their first # 1 hit in the US, besides becoming the band's anthem. Close on the heels of **Labour of Love** came their next effort **Geoffrey Manners** and their first ever tour of America and Canada. A meeting with rocker Chrissie Hynde after one of their live performances found the two musical forces collaborating together to cover the Sonny and Cher hit, **I Got You Babe.** Featured on the album **Rat in Mi Kitchen**, the single along with the albums title track dominated the charts for quite a while. And soon Chrissie Hynde once again dueted with Ali Campbell on the track **Breakfast in Bed,** featured on the next self-titled album, **UB40**. Then came the Platinum-Plus selling album, **Labour of Love II** in 1989. Two of its tracks, **The Way You Do The Things You Do** and **Here I am, Come Take Me** enjoyed instant chart success. A decade old, the band was now considered a force to reckon with.

Jim Brown (Drummer), Norman Hassan (Percussion), Michael Virtue (Keyboards), Robin Campbell (Rhythm Guitarist), Brian Travers (Saxophone)

The pop brand of reggae featuring smooth vocals, soft melodies and tremendous brass fillins had earned the band the honour of being the world's leading reggae outfit. An honour justified by their next release, the multi-platinum selling album, **Promises and Lies** and its mammoth hit single **Can't help falling in love**. A cover of the Elvis Presley ballad, the single stayed at number one on the US Pop charts for seven consecutive weeks, giving the band their biggest hit ever. The single may have crowned the band, Kings of Reggae but just like **Red Red Wine**, their second biggest hit, this one too was a cover version. Besides, most of the band's chart-busting material have been cover versions, which raised a reasonable amount of doubt concerning the band's ability to compose chart-topping songs.

Still reeling from gigantic success of the last album, the lads embarked on a tour of South Africa, where every concert of theirs is sold-out. Totally exhausted and needing a desperate break, each band member took a few years off to work on their individual projects. Finally returning

For those who missed the bus

The 22nd of February saw the Andheri (W) Sports Complex in Mumbai come alive with a scintillating performance by Brit Band UB40, who regaled the Mumbai audience with a generous helping of their addictive brand of Reggae Music. The energetic 90-minute long performance saw the good old lads from Birmingham serve up a platter full of their old and new tracks. Among them were the hits **Red Red Wine, Can't help falling in love, Kingston Town, Cherry oh Baby, Homely Girl, The way you do the Things you Do, Please Don't make me cry, Rat In Mi Kitchen** and their first ever hit, **King.** The band also performed excellent versions of Bob Marley's **Soul Rebel,** Dodd-Boothe's **The Train is coming,** Johnny Osbourne's **Come Back Darling** and Peter Tosh's **Legalise It.**

Lead-vacalist Ali Campbell looked cool as a cucumber in full back. His smooth soul-felt vocal delivery and cockney flavoured Hindi won him the appreciation of all present. He even sportingly kicked off the track, **Please Don't Make Me Cry** singing. **'Soniye, Soniye, Nachle Nachle Soniye.'** Although his voice appeared to have been straining towards the end of the show, he kept on performing his best like a thorough professional, as a result maintaining the high spirit of his co-band members and ensuring that the fans got what they expected. For those that weren't aware of the other band member's vocal talents, rhythm guitarist Robin Campbell charmed the audience with his rendition of Winston Francis' **Mr. Fixit,** while percussionist Norman Hassan won the admiration of all with his solo vocal performance, which found him displaying light fancy footwork and raspy bass vocals. Trumpeter Astro dedicated his vocal track **Rat In Mi Kitchen** to the Mumbai crowd and throughout the show lent his voice for most of the vocal harmony. The rest of the musicians were also fabulous in every sense of the word. Fans of the band missed them performing songs of the other hit tracks like **Higher Ground, Reggae Music, Breakfast in bed** and **I got you babe.** The latter two which could simply be ruled out due to the absence of Chrissie Hynde or another female vocalist.

UB-40 may have certainly wowed the Mumbai audience, but the rest of the evening had its share of highs and lows, the latter, which should have been avoided to ensure the overall success of an event so big. Punctuality seemed to be the benchmark of the evening with MTV VJ Cyrus formally kicking off the event with his own 'thang' at 7 p.m. sharp. Taking over from Cyrus were foursome DIP featuring Vikrant, all five of them looking like lost sheep on stage. The audience agreed that a Dandiya nite would have certainly been more up their alley. Girl trio Caliche were successful in reviving the spirit of the evening with their own version of the Beatles **'Can't Buy Me Love'** and a peppy Bhangra — ish original title **ADITAPPA ADITAPPA**. The next best thing to the UB40, Canadian gymnastic act Acrobasia, comprising of duo, Christian Pacquet and Jean Francoise Martel. The two Canadians with their sculpted bodies and out of this world muscle control and balance, displayed some gravity defying feats and soon had the fairer sex drooling and their male counterparts hollering for more. DJ Whosane also enthralled the audience with his trance — oriented mixes from his debut album **MOKSH.** And finally the show ended with UK-based Malkit Singh belting out his two hits **Gur Nal Ishq Mitha** and **Tutak Tutak Tutiya.** While the crowd was quite disappointed with the fact that Malkit was the closing act for the evening, the U.K.-based Bhangra Muffin was all smiles. 'Cause even in his wildest dreams he had never expected UB40 to be his opening act. As a matter of fact, it seems the experience has left a permanent ear to ear grin on Malkit's face.

On the production front, there were a number of loopholes. To begin with, one simply couldn't comprehend, why the event organizers compromised on using the best sound available, the absence of which accounted for the amateurish sound mix spewing from the P.A. The level of the high end was higher than the sky itself and each and every high pitched note was enough to send your eardrums into orbit. The setting of the monitor levels was pretty bad and throughout the band's performance, audio feedback seemed to hover over their heads. One would certainly expect that a band of the magnitude of UB40 to be pampered on the sound front. Something that certainly didn't happen on that night.

All told, the show presented by Gilbeys and Pepsi in association with Wizcraft was quite memorable and music lovers in Mumbai are eagerly looking forward to many more such events.

G.M.

in 1997 with two critically acclaimed albums, **Dance Hall** and **Guns in the Ghetto.** Though the latter two failed to make news on the charts, their subsequent release, **Labour of love III** made up for them. The video for one of its tracks, **The Train is Coming** was shot in good old India. Which brings us to the band's Indian Experience.

The Birmingham lads were quite well-versed with most of the Indian culture, tradition and music. "We all grew up in Birmingham, which is a British spot inhabited by multi-racial residents. As a matter of fact being exposed to a lot of Indians, their culture and tradition in the U.K., for us coming to India was like visiting our second home", says saxophonist Brian Travers. Adding "In fact, some us are huge fans of Indian music. Ali adores Asha Bhonsle, he met her in Abu Dhabi and is now looking forward to working with her. Besides, one of his favorite movies is an Indian one, **PYAASA.** As for me, my favourites are Lata Mangeshkar and Mohd..Rafi."

GLENN MASCARENHAS

Girls grab maximum Grammys

Lauryn Hill's solo debut album The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill and the hit single Doo Wop (That Thing) won the hip-hop star three Grammy awards at the 41st Annual Grammy Awards at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles on February 24 night. The Titanic ballad My Heart Will Go On won three, including song of the year, and Madonna also won three, while Shania Twain, Stevie Wonder and the Brian Setzer Orchestra were double winners.

Hill, whose 10 nominations led a parade of women up for awards, won best rhythm and blues album, best R and B song and the R and B vocal performance Grammy for Doo Wop. She lost one major category she was up for when non-classical producer of the year went to Rob Cavallo, who worked with the Goo Goo Dolls, Green Day and Alanis Morissette.

Hill, 23, and her acclaimed album — mixing rap and R and B, and touching on family and political issues — had a chance to win the most Grammys ever by a female artist in one night. (Carole King won four in 1971 for Tapestry). Hill already has two Grammys from her stint with the Fugees.

No hip-hop artist has won album of the year before, a category dominated this year by women. Other contenders included Sheryl Crow's The Globe Sessions, Madonna's Ray of Light, Twain for Come on Over, and Version 2.0 by alternative group Garbage, led by singer Shirley Manson. Crow, a five-time Grammy winner in recent years, and country-pop crossover sensation Twain received six nominations each, while Madonna had five bids.

Women also dominated the record of the year category. Madonna's Ray of Light and Twain's. You're Still the One were up against Brandy and Monica (The Boy Is Mine), Celine Dion (My Heart Will Go On) and the lone male entry, Iris, by the Goo Goo Dolls.

You're Still the One won best country song for Twain and husband Robert John 'Mutt' Lange and female country vocal performance for Twain. My Heart Will Go On brought the female pop vocal trophy to Dion and honours to writers James Horner and Will Jennings as best song written for a motion picture or television. The writers also won for song of the year.

Madonna got the first musical Grammy of her career — best dance recording for Ray of Light. The song also won short form music video. Her only previous Grammy was for a video in 1991. The male R and B vocal Grammy went to Stevie Wonder for St Louis Blues. The tune also earned him and two colleagues the award for instrumental arrangement with vocals. The two Grammys this year bring Wonder's career total to 21. Only Sir Georg Solti, Quincy Jones and Vladimir Horowitz have won more. Brandy and Monica won the R and B duo or group performance trophy for The Boy Is Mine. In the rap categories, Jay-Z's Vol.2...Hard Knock Life won best album. The rapper had said he wouldn't attend the show, because he doesn't like the way Grammys treat rap. In other awards the Beastie Boys won duo or group peformance for Intergalactic, while in his 12th Grammy victory of the 1990s, Eric Clapton won male pop vocal for My Father's Eyes. Burt Bacharach had his first win since 1986. He and Elvis Costello won for pop collaboration with vocals on I Still Have That Other Girl. Johny Cash, Mel Torme, Smokey Robinson and the late Sam Cooke and Otis Redding each received lifetime awards.

Madonna won the first musical Grammys of her career

Lauryn Hill and her acclaimed solo debut album, mixing rap and R and B, won three Grammys.

CROSSED VIBES

FROM THE WORLD OF

After the American Society of Composers and Performers called the Spice Girls Songwriters of the year, the two Mels celebrated by getting super new hairdos. Mel C has a new fringie while Mel B (now G) is a one-girl hair fountain. Along with songwriter gongs they picked up, "2 Become 1" was chosen as "Song of the year". Looks like the Girls will have to build another mantelpiece to display them.

However, during a recent German TV interview, All Saints claimed that Mel B's hit "I want you back" was offered to them, but they, turned it down due to other commitments. And then Nat chipped in "There's a lot of things I hate about the Spice Girls!"

Ex-Spicer girl **Geri** made sure that her first solo performance after leaving the Spicers was a mammoth event. In case you don't know, she sang "Happy Birthday" to the very excited Prince Charles on his 50th Birthday. The raunchy redhead has also been appointed Goodwill Ambassador of the UN and has begun work on her solo album. Phew.

Geri

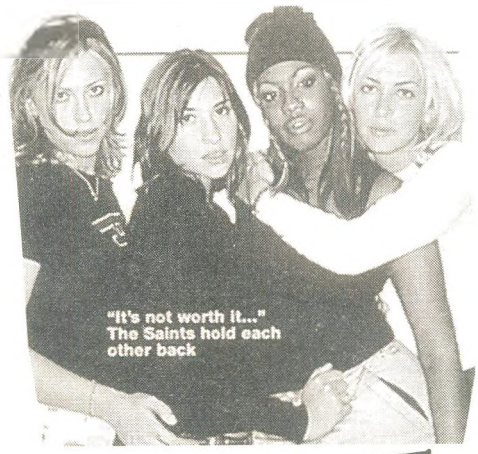
Posh Spice

Ant

Posh Victoria was recently asked to leave W. H. Smith in London after causing a scuffle. She'd popped in to buy wrapping paper for a present for David but after the autograph hunters surounded her the manager chucked her out because she was blocking the queue for the till. Meanwhile Mel C and Emma were almost thrown out of London's snooty Groucho Club for using a mobile phone.

Ant McPartlin got into a spot of bother recently when he was arrested after a scrap in an Oxford nightclub. The trouble started when a drunken clubber shouted at Ant's drinking buddies breaking a barman's nose. The cops were called but Ant and his two pals were later released without charge. It seems that controversial rocker **Marilyn Manson** is having a spot of trouble about getting into Australia. Marilyn was due to play at a one-day

Janet



All Saints

Natalie

Louise

Lisa (Steps)

Lee

festival. But the M.P. for New South Wales sent a letter to the Austtralian Immigration Ministry asking him to ban Manson's entry to the country because he was hell-bent on seducing innocent Australian kids into joining his Satanic cult.

Nic of **All Saints** was in need of some support after taking a tumble down steps and injuring her back. And since Robbie was busy, she was stuck with a stick. Of course being a stylish Saint, Nic selected a sleek black cane complete with soft rubber tip and finished off with male and female stabilisers on either side. Pretty soon no self-respecting popster will be without one.

Boyzone got a rude awakening during a recent promotion trip to Amsterdam. The Zone were enjoying a well-earned night's sleep when the hotel where they were staying caught fire. Although no serious damage is done, the lads were forced to spend the next hour shivering in the street all wearing nothing but matching hotel bathrobes. Don't you wish you were there?

Spiky-haired **Lee** of **911** is considering a rather unusual tattoo. The fella wants a barcode branded on his bicep with the words Boy Band printed underneath. Apparently this is Lee's 'ickle joke about how people think boy bands are packaged and sold like frozen food.

Sensitive **Natallie Imbruglia** has refused to be photographed in tee shirts and has taken to wearing long coats at every photo session. Why? Apparently she reckons her arms look fat in pics. Don't be silly Nat! Nobody's looking at your arms.

More sense and sensitivity. Before releasing her new album **Alanis Morisette** called up all of her ex-boyfriends to ask them if it was OK to sing about their relationships. Luckily they all said that it was.

As a gesture of thanks for appearing in the "Sweetest Thing" vid, U2 who are richer than everybody presented each member of **Boyzone** with a silver ring. The unique trinkets are shaped like miniature mirrorballs. So from now on, the Boys will be able to disco wherever they go.

Behind every witch is a Cat and those B* Witching Irish lasses are no exception. But the poor kitty who appears on their album sleeve is yet nameless. So the girls have asked their fans to christen him.

The real star of **Fire's** new single vid "Until Time Is Through" is also a beastie. A fella named Percy steals the show. You'll find the 15 foot 8 stone python wrapped around J in the classy vid. But this ain't Percy's first brush with fame. He also appeared on the cover of style mag Tatler, wrapped around Anthea Turner. Wonder who he preferred being wrapped around?

Lisa of **Steps** celebrated her birthday (like every year) on Guy Fawkes night. But this year while the Steps' beauty was busy

watching the fireworks, along came a li'l boy who asked her to sing "Heartbeat" for him. Never one to miss a chance to perform, Lisa belted out a solo to the hastily assembled crowd, accompanied only by herself on a sparkler.

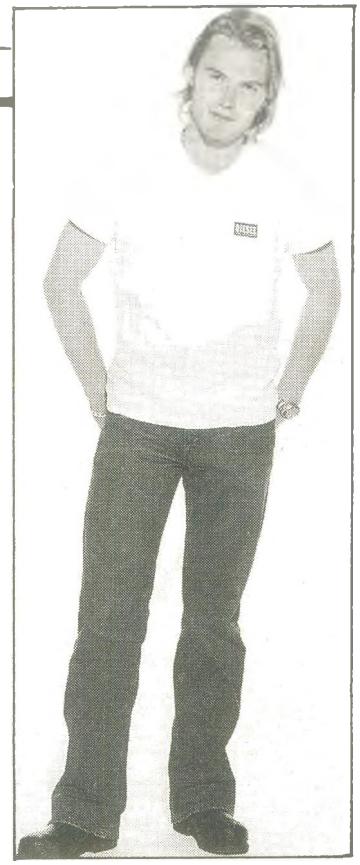
Janet Jackson shocked her audience at the VH - 1 fashion awards by letting rip a stream of saucy words live on stage after promising to cut them out the minx.

Pop stars and fashion have a funny relationship. Only last year silver trainers with swirly patterns were all the rage. But now you wouldn't catch a self-respecting popster washing his clothes in them. Smash Hits Best Dressed Male was **Ronan Keating** (despite claiming he wears track suits all year) while **Louise** was best dressed female. Alas the worst-dressed person was ex-Spice Geri Halliwell which is why she quickly auctioned all her clothes.

Jamiroquai's Jay Kay has been holding secret multi-million-pound talks with swanky clothes designer Hugo Boss. Apparently the singer has already sent Mr. Boss some of his design ideas and hopes to launch his own range very soon.

Will Smith is to wear a dress for his next flick. The guy looks fabulous as a woman, says his producer. Anyone for "Women in Black"?

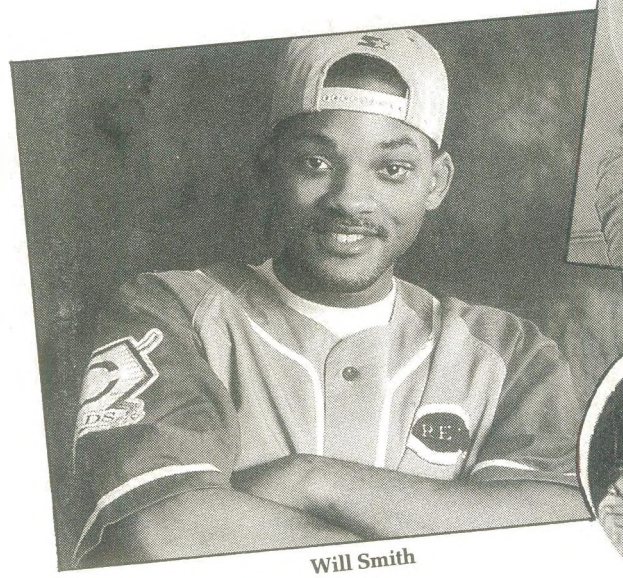
Posh London night club Heaven spent £ 3000 on a dressing room specially for a visit from Cher only for the dame to walk out halfway through the show. Her reason ? She didn't like people dancing to her tunes. Whatever else would she like people to do at dance clubs ? Being the oldest Lady Ever to have a Number one is no excuse...



Ronan Keating

Spice Girls

Sinead



Will Smith

Prince

Bjork

Puff Daddy's just re-signed to his record label for a cool £ 50 million. After five long fun-filled years **Ant McPartlin** and **Declan Donnelley** are splitting up. But never fear. The dynamic duo will still party together-they have just moved out of their shared pad.

Pop spies have revealed that **Robbie Williams** has recorded a version of the 80's hit Ant music (originally by pop rockers Adam and the Ants) with Indie trio, the Stereophonics. Could this be the mystery track on Rob's new single ?

Icelandic singer **Bjork** and the Artist formerly known as Prince have announced plans to record a single together. The official statement could well read something like this.

Bjork : We'll be doing a song that will talk like the nature of stones that exist in the burbling brook of life and sing like fruit from foreign tree.

The artist : It will be called ♥

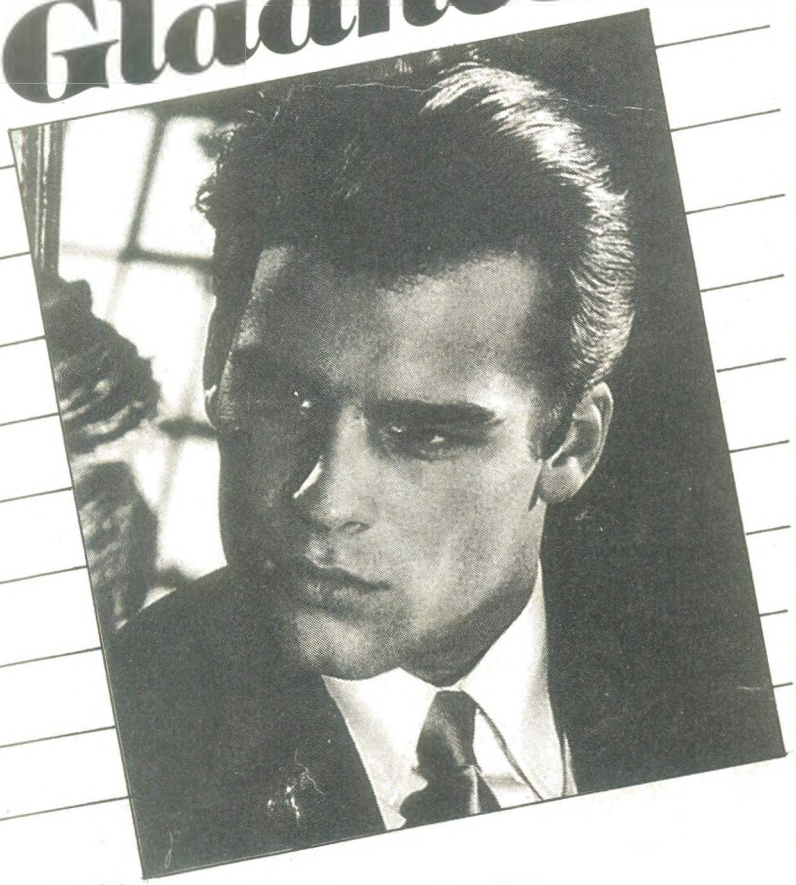
Bjork. We're both nuts you know

The artist. So you can call it ♥ and ❀

ANNE DE BRAGANCA CUNHA

SOUND ADVICE

Sadness Or Gladness



One of the happiest persons that I know is blind. He talks enthusiastically about his plans to graduate and his new ideas for his terrace garden. You can see the contentment shining out of him. It's only when he gets up from his chair to get me a drink that I remember his disability.

Yes, he is blind. And he is happy. Happy over all the things that he can learn and touch and smell and hear. Happy about the promise of tomorrow. Watching him I couldn't help thinking of a friend's father.

A few years ago this second man, a busy executive had a stroke. It wasn't what the doctors call a massive one, but his right side will never quite regain normal function. One foot drags a bit when he walks and he has trouble manipulating a pen. Frankly I hate to be with him. His whole life, his whole family's life - has contracted into a bitter brooding over the things that he can't do. He can't swing around a dance floor. He can't dash off his signature. He can't play golf, he can't do this, he can't do that, it's an endless dark alley of deprivations.

Is life a good glad adventure ? Or is it a miserable business of pain and frustrations and gray defeat ? Optimists and pessimists toss the question back and forth and never find the answer.

The world is full of glories. It also has disease and disaster. What makes its gladness or sadness is not what happens to you. It is what you think.

There are just two directions that your thinking can take. It can be concentrated on all the good things that happen to you. Or it can fix upon what mishaps may befall you or what you lack or what might have been. Think in the first way and even physical blindness cannot dim the world. Think in the second way and even a pin - pricked finger can loom menacingly.

Nothing is more irritating than the kind of Pollyanna prattle which seeks to tell you that your sufferings are all in the mind and that you can get rid of them just by pretending cheerfully that they aren't there.

They are. A blind boy is blind, an ailing man is ailing; when you have broken your leg or failed your exam you are not imagining things. Still it is possible to take the sting out of the worst catastrophe and make it powerless to mar your life.

But it is not by pretending that you can banish trouble. Actually it is by thinking hard upon the excellences of life that all contrary influences are nullified.

Human attention cannot be focussed on two things at the same time. Try pinching your toe until it really hurts. Bad ? Now still pinching the toe, pinch your shoulder with the other hand. Pinch the shoulder harder and harder until the shoulder pain equals the toe pain. Then pinch the shoulder harder still. Suddenly there is no pain in the toe at all. It has disappeared. Your mind has rejected it for something stronger.

This is what you see when a sadhu concentrating totally on the Infinite holds his hand in a candle flame and feels no pain.

You see the same principle every time a child tumbles off a bicycle, grazes his shin and jumps back whistling, his whole mind so full of coming cricket match that there is no room for suffering.

We all tumble off bicycles and get scratched by thorns. But how much you feel these things, how big they seem to you, how real a hurt they inflict depends on the counterclaims to your mind. If you think wholeheartedly of all the good and glad things in your life, it is impossible for pain and fear to beset you.

To begin with you can enjoy simple things - a delicious dinner, the feeling of fresh air on your face, a sunset.

It is astomishing how many such simple pleasures there are, no matter what. Tot them up and they add up and up, the more you take to thinking about them. The more you think about them, the less you are able to think of anything less pleasent.

ANNE DE BRAGANCA CUNHA

911 make it to the top of U.K. charts

From one of pop's most popular trios, 911's cover of the Bee Gees' 'More Than A Woman was considered to be their best bet to achieve UK No. 1 last October, but it stopped short by one notch, peaking at No. 2 on the UK singles chart.

However, 911's cover of Dr. Hook's 'A 'Little Bit More' - from their third album, 'There It Is' (launched here by Virgin Records, simultaneously with the rest of the world) - finally had them achieve their first UK No. 1, achieving pole position on January 23, 1999. For the trivia-minded, Dr. Hook's original peaked at No. 2 over 22 years ago, spending five weeks at that spot behind Elton John's first UK No. 1 - a duet with Kiki Dee - 'Don't Go Breaking My Heart'.

'A Little Bit More' also becomes 911's 11th UK 'Top 40' hit from as many releases and is just one of several "covers" in the UK Top 10. Steps' 'Tragedy' and Blockster's 'You Should be Dancing' (Bee Gees hits from 1979 and 1976, respectively) are followed by Emmie's 'More Than This' at No. 6, just behind the No. 5 peak of the original Roxy Music recording from 1982.

Joining the Bee Gees with two 'Top 20' writing credits is disco diva Donna Summer (the surname is in singular, and not "Summers" as most critics/radio DJs tend to believe). In the meantime, Cassius becomes the fourth French act to achieve a UK 'Top 20' hit in the last two years. Their debut, 'Cassius 1999', which enters the singles chart at No. 7, samples Ms. Summer's 'Love Is Just A Breath Away', a song from her self-titled 1982 album.

Meanwhile, Juliet Robert's cover of Summer's 'Bad Girls' debuts on the UK singles chart at No. 17 Ms. Summer wrote the song with husband, guitarist Bruce Sudano, Edward Hokenson and Joe Esposito, whereas 'Love Is Just A Breath Away' was written by Donna Summer with Canadian producer David Foster and British writer Rod Temperton, himself responsible for hits for Heatwave (his 'Boogie Nights' appears as a cover on the 911 album) and for Michael Jackson ('Thriller').

While the last Spice Girl's song, 'Goodbye', bids just that to the UK 'Top 10' after four weeks, member Mel C's 'When You're Gone' (a duet with Bryan Adams) shows more staying power as it has already spent seven weeks in the 'Top 10'.

That's it for the moment... more follows next month!

P.K.

U.K. TOP TEN SINGLES

1.	A LITTLE BIT MORE	911
2.	I WANT YOU FOR MYSELF	Another Level
3.	HEARTBEAT/TRAGEDY	Steps
4.	PRAISE YOU	Fatboy Slim
5.	MORE THAN THIS	Emmie
6.	WHEN YOU'RE GONE	Bryan Adams feat Mel C
7.	CASSIUS 1999	Cassius
8.	YOU SHOULD BE	Blockster
9.	CHOCOLATE SALTY BALLS (PS LOVE YOU)	Chef (Rubin) Hilarity (Parker)
10.	WALK LIKE A PANTHER '98	The All Seeing I

U.K. TOP TEN ALBUMS

1.	YOU'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY	Fatboy Slim
2.	I'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU	Robbie Williams
3.	WHERE WE BELONG	Boyzone
4.	LADIES & GENTLEMEN- THE BEST OF	George Michael
5.	STEP ONE	Steps
6.	TALK ON CORNERS	The Corrs
7.	RAY OF LIGHT	Madonna
8.	FORGIVEN, NOT FORGOTTEN	The Corrs
9.	THE BEST OF 1980-1990	U2
10.	THE BEST OF M PEOPLE	M People

U.S. TOP TEN ALBUMS

1.	FLESH OF MY FLESH BLOOD OF MY BLOOD	DMX
2.	THE MISEDUCATION OF LAURYN HILL	Lauryn Hill
3.	GREATEST HITS	2 PAC
4.	AMERICANA	The Offspring
5.	HARD KNOCK LIFE	Jay - Z
6.	'N SYNC	'N Sync
7.	SPIRIT	Jewel
8.	# I'S	Mariah Carey
9.	DOUBLE LIVE	Garth Brooks
10.	NOW	Various Artists

■ LOVE STORIES/ ABBA — POLYGRAM

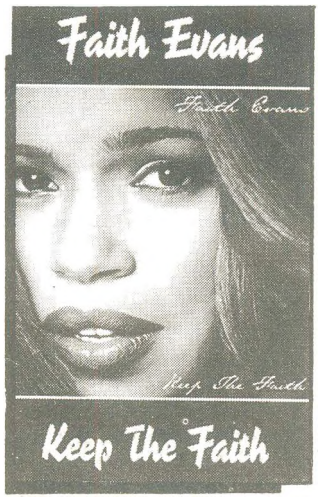
Ain't no question about it - this quartet from Gothenburg, Sweden is one of the greatest outfits in the history of pop music. ABBA was formed as two couples in love who eventually went on to dominate much of the world music scene in the second half of the 70s. This compilation showcases some of their skilfully crafted and produced ballads and mid-tempo songs. Not all are "love songs" as such, but they all tell a story of some kind, hence "Love Stories". Included here are timeless classics like **Fernando, The name of the game, Chiquitta, The winner takes it all, I have a dream, The day before you came, One of us, Andante andante, One man one woman, Slipping through my fingers, Like an angel passing through my room, Let the music speak,** and many others. There can be no greater example of fame and success at the very top of the popular music tree. ABBA disbanded a year after their last world tour in 1979. We will almost certainly never see them on-stage again performing their catalogue of classics, but fortunately their recordings are still here for us to enjoy.

■ THE BEST OF THE LEMONHEADS: THE ATLANTIC YEARS/ THE LEMONHEADS — MUSIC TODAY

This album features some of the finest moments from the auspicious era of so-called alternate rock. The Lemonheads' music constantly veered from playful to arrogant, ironic to introspective, adventurous and tightly-woven studio pop to stripped down shambolic sonic fervour. Included here are selected cuts from the three albums the group recorded with Atlantic ('Lovey', 'It's A Shame About Ray' and 'Car Button Cloth'). **Ride with me** bridges first generation punk-fuelled rock with introspective lyrics. **Confetti** and **Rudderless** are high energy tracks that dwell on the moments of everyday life. **My drug buddy** is a heart-wrenching track that stands as one of the most honest accounts of friendship. **Big gay heart** is an anti-violence theme piece with country overtones. Their perky cover of Simon & Garfunkel's **Mrs. Robinson** is my pick of the album.

■ KEEP THE FAITH/ FAITH EVANS — BMG CRESCENDO

I haven't listened too much R & B lately so this album's a fresh welcome to the ears indeed. Songwriter, producer and singer, Faith Evans is a vocal powerhouse, much in the mould of Phyllis Hyman and Angela Bofill. The single, **Love like this**, has uptempo grooves guaranteed to conjure up memories of early '80s house party vibes. On ballads like **Lately I** and **Caramel kisses,** Faith delivers riffs with a power and effortlessness that make you feel her joy and pain. Her voice delivers emotions that are alternately sweet and loving, then visceral and raw with a sincerity that strikes you hard and heavy.



■ SPEAK OF THE DEVIL/ CHRIS ISAAK — MUSIC TODAY

'Speak Of The Devil' is a darker and more dense in tone than past Isaak efforts, though there's a moody reverberating atmosphere that runs through his catalogue from the mid-80's 'Silvertone' through last year's freewheeling 'Baja Sessions'. The album's keynote is gritty rock and roll. It kicks off with **Please**, a polished, yet contemporary-sounding straight-ahead rock song with electric guitar, et al. **Talking about a home** is Isaak's ode to settling down and title track talks about a love in vain. There's humour in songs like **Don't get so down on youself**. Of course, there's the thing that Isaak does best - quintessential love-gone-wrong-and-let's-make-it- right kind of songs, as on the loping, country-tinged **This time,** and the teary jingle **Walk slow.**

■ MAXI DANCE GOLD/ VARIOUS — PLUS MUSIC

Following the smash success of their previous 'Maxi Dance' albums, a 'Gold' album was only to be expected. It's good marketing strategy from Plus Music if not anything else. This album features 17 of the biggest hits of the day including **Hello how are you, Picture of you, Millennium, Believe, Cruel summer, I'll never break your heart, Thank U, Obladi oblada, Kung fu fighting, I don't want to miss a thing, Never ever** and **I say a little prayer.** Only problem is these are all covers. But since when has that dampened your spirits?

■ BAM'S NO. 1 DANCE STOMPERS/ VARIOUS — POLYGRAM

In the first of the great dance albums from Polygram this month, we've got a whopper, and all original cuts at that. The album opens with Steps' **5,6,7,8** and takes you through a range of remixes of international hits like **Mmmbop, Truly madly deeply, My heart will go on, Doctor Jones, I'll be missing you, Back into the groove, Horny '98, Men in black, Torn** and **Frozen.** Pick of the lot is a delightful samba version of Ricky Martin's **Un dos tres (Maria).** There's also a fair sprinkling of Indian pop hits including **Yeh mera dil, Bas ek bar** (both by Asha Bhonsle), **Gabbar mix** (Bali Brahmbhatt) and **My heart is beating** (Preeti Sagar). Absolutely a knockout of an album, this!

■ BAM'S SMOKIN' GROOVES '98/ VARIOUS — POLYGRAM

Still more dance hits from Polygram. Included on the sleeve are some of the best dance tracks of last year including **I'll be missing you, Feel so good, Getting jiggy with it, Truly madly deeply, You make me wanna, Money makes the world go round, Tease you please you, It's all about the Benjamins, The boy is mine, C U when U get there** and **Men in black.** This album's destined for supersellerdom all right, given the generous dosage of high energy dance music that it contains. Go on, shake your tailfeather.

■ ANOTHER CRAZY COCKTAIL PARTY: SHAKE YOUR CONGAS/ VARIOUS — BMG CRESCENDO

More dance music comes your way, although this one's in a totally

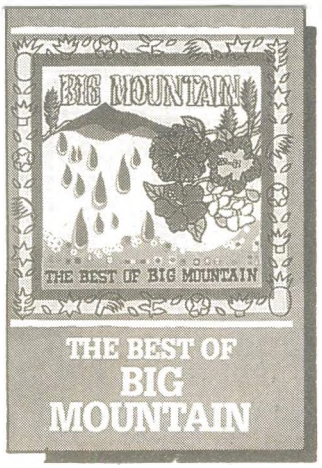
different groove. Here's some good old Latino music for a change. The arrangements are top class and the orchestrations just out of this world. There's a magical feel to tracks like **Chiquito** (Reuben Cazaldo & His Orchestra) and **La cucarachacha** (The Peter Lowland Orchestra) that will make you want to sway to the rhythms. But I particularly liked all the congas by Los Albinos **(Big bang conga, Swinging conga, Chinese conga, Go to conga** and **Frere Jacques conga.** I'm sure you'll want to shake your congas too, every time you hear the record play. Simply put in one word, this compilation's DELIGHTFUL!

■ **MUGZY'S MOVE/ ROYAL CROWN REVUE — MUSIC TODAY**

And here's some cool jazz for a change. This LA-based band is wild and whacky as they come. You may remember the swinging jive track, **Hey Pachuco** which Jim Carrey danced to in the movie. 'The Mask'. That's only one of the goodies on the album. Most of the tracks talk about underworld dons, their ideas of fun, their work and their lives in general. **I live the life I love and I love the life I live** is a mid-tempo jazz track that's smart and witty. **The walkin' blues** is a bluesy single with plenty of sax, trumpet and percussion. Eddie Nichols, the band's lead vocalist is in fine form here with his honey vocals.

■ **THE BEST OF BIG MOUNTAIN/ BIG MOUNTAIN — BMG CRESCENDO**

The first time I heard them croon **Baby I love your way** I couldn't keep from tapping my feet. Yup, that's what the rhythms of Big Mountain can do to anyone. Here's the belated but very welcome 'Best Of'



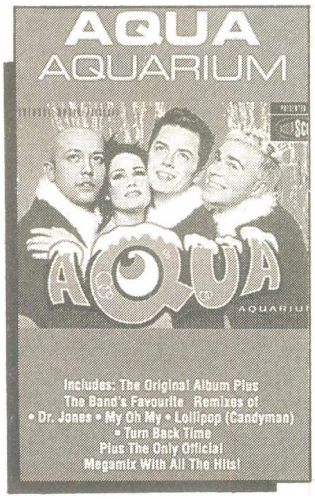
album from this reggae outfit. Included in this 15-track collection are some of Big Mountain's biggest hits including **Let's stay together, Caribbean blue, Lean on me, Sweet sensual love, All kinds of people, Border town, I would find a way, Touch my light** and, of course, **Baby I love your way.** This is reggae at its infectious best.

■ **THE DANCE ALBUM/ ENGELBERT HUMPERDINCK — BMG CRESCENDO**

Nobody in the whole wide world sings a song like Engelbert Humperdinck. A love song acquires a whole new meaning and dimension when Engelbert sings it. The feel's completely different. No wonder they called him 'The King of Romance'. Such was the popularity of the man in the 70s and the 80s. I've literally grown up on a staple diet of Engelbert since I was a kid, and my heart still skips a beat when I listen to tracks like **Release me, Les bicyclettes de belsize, Ten guitars** and **There goes my everything.** This new album of Engelbert features newly recorded dance versions of six of his greatest hits including. **A man without love, The last waltz, Quando quando quando, After the lovin' Spanish eyes** and **Release me.** Plus a host of new tracks too. Within a month of its release, the album has moved to the top of the UK charts. Just goes to show how influential the music of Engelbert Humperdinck still is.

■ **AQUARIUM/ AQUA — BMG CRESCENDO**

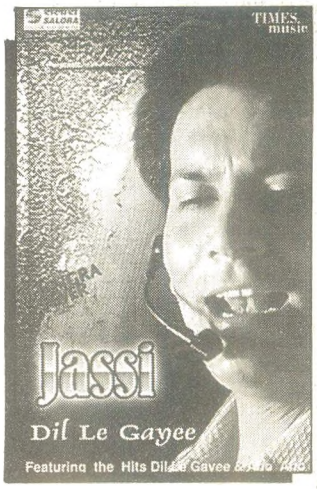
Just a couple of months back, I had reviewed the 'Remix' album of Aqua. Now here's a unique package containing the original album, plus the band's favourite remixes of popular tracks like **Dr. Jones, My oh my, Lollipop (Candyman)** and **Turn back time.** Incidentally, 'Aquarium' achieved 5 times platinum status, having sold in excess of 3,30,000 units in India



alone. So this is a good opportunity to grab a copy of the album for those who missed out the last time. Then go shake a leg (or just sit back and listen) to Claus, Soren, Lene and Rene, as they turn on the heat with the tracks we've all come to love.

■ **DIL LE GAYEE/ JASSI — TIMES MUSIC**

The foot-tapping title track has been making extended rounds on the music channels and it's not



hard to see why. At a time when most performers rely heavily on stage antics and screen gimmicks, Jasbir Jassi still focuses on niceties like "sur' and "taal." In this album, Jassi adopts a unique musical style that suits the preference of youngsters. Two other tracks deserve mention. **Surma nimma nimma** is a lilting pop ballad and **Ek tara wazda** is an adaptation of a Punjabi folk song. This lad from Gurdaspur is certainly worth a listen.

■ **BIG BIGGER BIGGEST: THE BEST OF MR. BIG/ MR. BIG — MUSIC TODAY**

For those who come in late, this California quartet (consisting of Eric Martin, Billy Sheehan, Pat Torpey and Paul Gilbert) is easily one of the top rock acts of the 90s. Over the years they've had a glut of chartbusters. You've obviously enjoyed songs like **Wild world, Just take my heart** and **To be with you.** This album's the first-ever celebration of the group's biggest hits (it's about time they had a 'Best Of' anyway). **Goin' where the wind blows** is stylistic and emotional in approach, and places the listener at a key juncture among life's different phases. The melodic, mid-

tempo **Take cover** touches on deeply personal subjects. As is to be expected, the group once again brings forth expert chops, strong voice and a creative punch into his album.

■ **RICE & CURRY/ DR. BOMBAY — MUSIC TODAY**

Check these statistics out. The sales of 'Rice & Curry' have already crossed 2,25,000 units, making it the bestselling album in Sweden in 1998. That's close to Triple Platinum status! By every means an amazing feat for a man of Indian origin who came out of absolutely nowhere to rocket up the music charts. You've probably seen the video of **Calcutta (taxi, taxi, taxi)** on the music channels. It's hilarious and rib-ticklingly funny. As for the music, it's funky, freaky, crazy. Not exactly my cuppa coffee, but I suppose it'll find a good-sized audience all right.

■ **LOVE FROM ALBERTANE/ HANSON — POLYGRAM**

This album was apparently recorded live at the Key Arena, Seattle. WA, on July 21 last year, before a horde of screaming, shouting fans. Coming close on the heels of the band's super smash album, '3 Car Garage', this compilation features all their hit songs including **Mmmbop, I will come to you, River, Ever lonely, A minute without you, Where's the love, With you in my dreams,** and **Money (that's what I need).** Being a live album, it's got an entirely different feel from a studio album, and may dilute the listening pleasure. On the other hand, just close your eyes and let the music take its course. It's the next best thing to actually being there.

■ **PANIQUE CELTIQUE/ MANAU — POLYGRAM**

Call this kind of music Irish hip hop in a broader sense if you wish. But with their very conservative Breton roots, Manau, which comprises of Martial Tricoche, R. V. Lardic and Cedric Soubiron, specialises in Celtic rap. The opening piece, **La tribu de Dana** (meaning **Dana's tribe**) is an essential space-time collision of the tribal legends of ancient Amorica. It's is a pure warrior saga with chanted lyrics set to a blend of Celtic grooves. Sample it. It's quite unlike anything else you've heard before.

■ **ASK ANYBODY/ SWIRL 360 — POLYGRAM**

They're the latest kids on the block, and this is their debut album. Positive side: Strong vocals and mushy lyrics that should appeal to the new MTV Generation. Flip side: there are already too many groups that sound the same. To Swirl 360's credit, they have already had a hit single with **Hey now now**, which is receiving lots of airplay on the music stations. The rest of the album isn't bad either. Okay they're not in the big league as yet. But with a little patience and perseverance, I don't see why they shouldn't go a long way.

■ **THE REMIX ALBUM/ ALL SAINTS — POLYGRAM**

No sooner does a group hit the big time, a remix album is sure to follow even before the group gets to recording some fresh material. Now here's one from All Saints, the all-girl group which struck it very rich last season. The album contains as many as four remixes of **Lady marmalade** and **Bootie call**, three of **Never ever** and two of **I know where it's at**. You have everything from **Timberland mix, Star mix, Groove mix, Bounce mix, Vocal remix, Lite dub** and **Wrecked dub**. The repetitive hammering of the same tracks over and over gets to be a tad too monotonous. Unless you're a diehard fan of the group, the albums strictly avoidable.

■ **MANILOW SINGS SINATRA/ BARRY MANILOW — BMG CRESCENDO**

Anyone who understands the ABC of music will tell you that Frank Sinatra rates among the most influential and most loved entertainers of all time. Barry Manilow pays homage to the legendary American singer his 30th album release, rendering the songs Sinatra made immortal. Digging through the catalogue of Sinatra material, Manilow has hand-picked some favourites like **Strangers in the night, In the wee small hours of the morning, Summer wind, Chicago is my kind of town, Saturday is the loneliest night of the week** and **I've got the world on a string**. Manilow shows his personal appreciation for Sinatra with two original songs written especially for this album, **One man in a spotlight** and **Here's to the man** highlighting this spectacular album. The only disappointment is that Sinatra's greatest track of all, **My way** has surprisingly been left out of this collection.

■ **WORLDWIDE/ NADANUF — MUSIC TODAY**

Another rap outfit seeking to establish its credentials is a young female duo from Cincinnati, specialising in hip hop. As is typical with most rap albums, the sum and substance of their debut effort hangs heavily on the crazy rhyming and uncanny hooks. The album kicks off with the funky title track, which has a thumping '70s bass line **Single life** is a silk-smooth R & B track about independence. **Good life** a take off on the classic **Street life**, is the most uptempo track in the album. But the duo shine brightest on spirited tracks like the romantic **Reminisce** and a spunky version of The Isley's **Caravan Ride, Losing You** is an emotional farewell to dear departed one, while **Looking Out My Window** and **6 am** are moving pictures of real life. Nadnuf also pays tribute to rap pioneer Kurtis Blow, who teams up with the duo in a reworking of the "gold-certified" hip hop classic, **The Breaks.**

■ **GOVINDA/ GOVINDA — HMV**

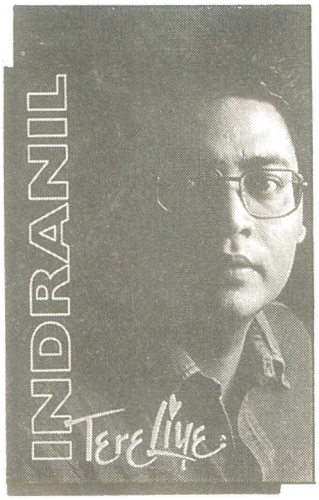
With the growing demand for Indian pop music, everyone from Vjs to Djs and from swimming instructors to choreographers are suddenly discovering their "hidden talent" for singing. Even a few flop film stars have tried their luck at making a quick buck with a music

album or two. Latest in line is Govinda — the King of all *Taporis* (though he isn't a flop artiste by any means). Style and lyric-wise, his pop album seems to be a continuation of his

film songs. **So what** on the flip side, is the quintessential *tapori* type track, as is **Peeli skirtwali** — a duet with sis Kamini Khanna (who's written the lyrics for the album). There's a concentrated effort to cash in on the Punjabi boom with **Kadd ditti jaan, Mare aankh da nishana** and **Ik dekhi maine kudi Punjabi**. All in all, this one caters to the *taporis* all right.

■ **TERE LIYE/ INDRANIL — BMG CRESCENDO**

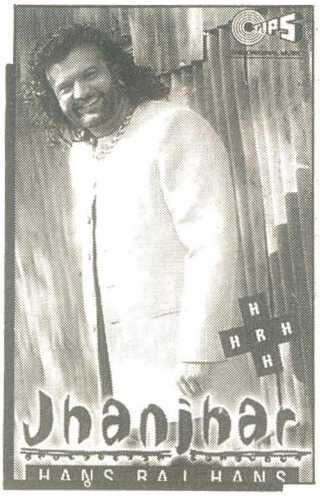
Here's a very interesting album with good composition and meaningful lyrical content. Indranil Sen is one of the best known vocalists of the present



generation and one of the biggest names in Bengali music. 'Tere Liye' is his debut album in Hindi. As the title suggests, this is a collection of romantic love songs. The standout number is the album opener **Chalna chalna**, the video of which is currently hot on the music channels. It will add twang to the air at Valentine, I suppose.

■ **JHANJHAR/ HANS RAJ HANS — TIPS**

Some more detectable Punjabi pop comes your way. Hans Raj Hans has already established his credentials and is now looking to consolidate his



base. 'Jhanjhar', his latest album, has some decent dance grooves as well as a couple of smooth ballads. The title track (written by Dev Kohli) is an uptempo track, ideally cut out for you if you like to shake a leg. As for all you party animals who dig bhangra; let's say *balle balle* to that.

■ **ALL TIME HITS: THE NINETIES REMIX/ VARIOUS — PLUS MUSIC**

The second edition of Plus's 'All Time Hits' is even better than the first. Among the films covered are old-time classics like 'Albela' and 'Mera Saaya' to the recent 'Bombay' This collection features golden oldies like **Lari lappa** ('Ek Thi Ladki'), **Shola jo bhadke** ('Albela') **Mein ka karu Ram** ('Sangam') **Dil ka hal** ('Shree 420'), **Jhumka gira re** ('Mera Saaya') and modern tracks like **Jahan teri yeh hai** ('Kaalia'), **Dhak dhak karne laga** ('Beta') and **Humma humma** ('Bombay'). Never mind that these aren't the originals. They're groovy just the same

■ **JADOO/ REMIX: DJ AKBAR SAMI — TIMES MUSIC**

The team that brought you 'Jalwa' returns to centrestage with a brand new chartbuster. 'Jadoo' features evergreen film songs all connected by a common theme — they're all paeans to the beauty of women. There's **Sara zamana** ('Yaarana'), **O haseena zulfonwali** ('Teesri Manzil'), **Sundara sundara** ('Rakshak'). **Pardah hai pardah** ('Amar Akbar Anthony'), **Jadoo teri nazar** ('Darr') and **Yeh chand sa roshan chehra** ('Kashmir Ki Kali'). But the most unusual of the lot is a bhangra remix of **Ek ladki ko dekha to aisa laga** ('1942: A Love Story'). DJ

Akbar Sami's mixing is superb. The album's a surefire hit.

■ **LOVE BLOOMS AGAIN (VOL. 1 & VOL. 2)/ VARIOUS — HMV**

A special Valentine release, this double pack pays tribute to the great love songs from Hindi films. Featured, here are some of the most unforgettable romantic anthems of the last quarter of a century. **Volume 1** covers the period, 1974 to 1989. Among the songs are **Aye dil-e-nadaan** ('Razia Sultan'), **Ek ajnabee haseena se** ('Ajnabee'), **Yeh kahan aa gaye hum** ('Silsila'), **Tere mere beech mein** ('Ek Duje Ke Liye'), **Bhaware ne khilaya phool** ('Prem Rog'), **Tumko dekha to yeh khayal aaya**

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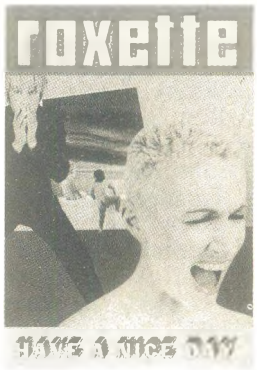
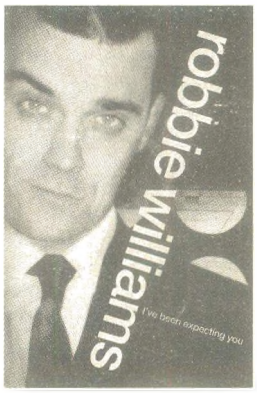
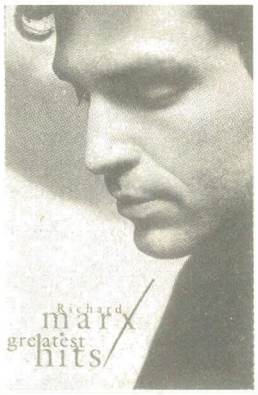


The latest album of Roxette released worldwide on 22nd February, includes the hit single 'Wish I Could Fly' & 'Crush On You'



Includes the chart topping hits 'Millennium' & 'No Regrets', along with the hit single 'Strong'



Includes the brand new tracks 'Slipping Away' & 'Angel's Lullaby' Other hits include 'Right Here Waiting' 'Hazard', 'Children Of The Night' & 'Now And Forever'

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('Saath Saath'), **Humen tumse pyar kitna** ('Kudrat'), **Dard-e-dil** ('Karz') and **Rajnigandha phool tumhare** ('Rajnigandha'). **Volume 2** covers the tumultuous 90s. The songs include **Maine pyar kiya** ('Maine Pyar Kiya'), **Jabse tumhe dekha** ('Damini'), **Rim jhim rim jhim** ('1942: A Love Story'), **Mere sanson mein tum** ('Aaina'), **Tu mere saamne** ('Darr'), **Door na ja mujhse** ('Sapnay'), **Pyar ko ho jane do** ('Dushman'), **Ho gaya hai tujkho to pyar sajna** ('Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge') and **Are re are** ('Dil To Paagal Hai'). Love can't get any better than this in the movies. Only major disappointment is that there's very little pre-1980 material in this collection — just two numbers to be precise.

■ BEWITCHED/ BEWITCHED — SONY MUSIC

Bewitched is Sinead, Edele, Keavy and Lindsay. This all-girl, new group is making big waves on and off the circuit. They have already hit the big time with the single. **Cest la vie**. This self-titled album is a collection of some excellent, foot-tapping grooves, I particularly liked the tracks, **To you I belong, Castles in the air, Like the rose, Blame it on the weatherman** and **Oh Mr. Postman.** One of the most unusual numbers is the autobiographical **We four girls**. Good grooves, snappy lyrics, catchy rhythms. A must-buy!

■ POP GOES DANCE/ VARIOUS — MILESTONE

19 super pop tracks of 1998 get a dance groove dressing here. This complilation is by far one of the best albums on review this month. Included on the sleeve are **No matter what, I believe, Because of you, I don't want to miss a thing, Last thing on my mind, My heart will go on, Truly madly deeply, Lady marmalade, Lost in space, You're still the one, If you only knew, Brother Louie, Turn back time, Lost in space** and **Let the music heal your soul.** None of the songs are original versions by the artists who made them famous, but I don't think even the diehard music buff is going to mind too much.

■ BLISS/ BLISS — HMV

This one's a brand new boy group, and a pretty talented one at that; these guys obviously seem to believe that the mushier the song, the better it turns out. The album essentially comprises romantic ballads. The album opener, **Baby, he loves you,** is a belter of a love song. All the other tracks sound good after a couple of listens. **Run to you** is my pick of the lot. HMV have included a Capella version as well as a Karaoke version of the song I haven't seen a video of the group as yet, but I'm sure there's one on the way if there isn't one already. Mark my words, these guys are going to be red hot before you know it.

■ FIRST SUMMER/ MYNTA — MILESTONE

It is an appropriate title for their debut album as this is indeed Mynta's first summer together as a group. To put it in a philosophic way, there's some kind of free spirit to these East-meets-West fusion rhythms. All 12 tracks are punctuated with Indian and Western dance elements, clearly evident from the title track which is also the album opener. The standout track is **Sera yeah yeah** for its superb percussion and basswork. Quite impressive for a first-up effort, this.

■ CHORI CHORI/ ANAIDA — BMG CRESCENDO

She may have lacked the focus in her last album. But there's no dispute whatsoever about the fact that Anaida is one of the top crooners on the Hindi pop music scene today. Her latest album, 'Chori Chori', is noticeably a much concentrated effort. The album opener, **Kacchi kali** has a catchy rhythm, as does the title track. There's some crassy stuff like **Aanka maar gaya** for the tapori types as well. So the album has a little bit of something for everybody.

Santosh Nair's musical arrangements are top class. And the lyrics by Maya Govind and Manohar Iyer aren't too bad either. There's plenty of connectivity with the listener this time around.

Chori Chori projects a more mature **Anaida**. The album is based on traditional folk music. It has combined efforts of Mrs. Ira Roshan who has composed the wonderful music, along with Maya Govind who has penned the lyrics, Santosh Nair with his contribution of composing two tracks in the album, Tambi Fernando who has produced the album with a whole lot of talented musicians. The first video has already been shot and is aired on all the music channels. The video has been shot on the song "Oonchee Neechee", which is one of the slower numbers from the album and has been directed by none other than Sanjay F. Gupta. The treatment of this video is absolutely unique — the location being a desert at night bereft of any glamour.

All in all **Chori Chori** is a treat from **Anaida** to all her fans and music lovers.

■ THE ASLI LOIN MIX/ SHEHZAD KHAN — BMG CRESCENDO

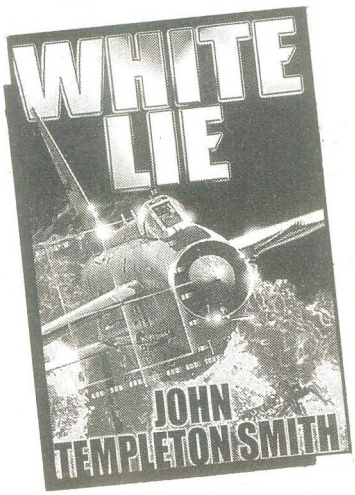
Although he's dead and gone now, the legendary Hindi film villain Ajit is still fondly remembered by his famous *Loin* act. Which self-respecting film aficionado can forget the Loin's henchmen, Peter, Tony and Michael for that matter? Or his molls, Lily and Mona? Ajit's popularity can be gauged by the legion of Loin jokes that were spawned by his oddity. In this album, Shehzad Khan attempts to relive trademark Loin dialogues like "Mona, sona kahan hai," "Michael, tu cycle le jaa. Tony, tu pony le le," and "Lily, don't be silly". The video of **The asli Loin mix** that's playing on the music channels is quite a rage already. The rest of the album features songs from Ajit's films like `Zanjeer', `Mr. Natwarlal', `Warrant', `Naya Daur', `Kallicharan', `Suraj' and `Kahani Kismat Ki'. It may not really be the "baap of all mixes' as the slug on the inlay card suggests, but for old timers, it is certain to touch a nerve somewhere.

IVOR VAZ

WHITE LIE

By John Templeton Smith
Published by Pocket Books
Distributed by IBD
Price £ 4.50

The drug cartels in Columbia are very powerful and much of the drug lands in the States. In the States, the CIA is very powerful and does everything in its power to stop the influx of drugs. But the cartels, especially, the Cali cartel owned by Emilio Figueras, have managed to have a nexus with the official administration and hence CIA is told to have a hands off policy. But there is a man who has other ideas. He is John Winter, a mercenary who has a reputation of spawning trouble in Third World countries. How does he come into the picture?



John Winter has lived in the US under the false identity of Deavas Liam Carroll, a professor of European History. He fell in love and married Julia; a television presenter who was doing a series on drug related crimes. She was sexually assaulted and murdered by the son of Emilio Figueras. Winter seeks him out, makes him confess the crime and kills him. Later he escapes.

He first seeks out an old friend, an aviator called Charlie. Charlie was working as a dishwasher, in a local diner in Key West. He takes him away to South America and the two plan to buy a plane and fly it to base of Cali cartel. They have all their plans in place but the cartel bombs their hideout. Fortunately, Winter and Charlie escape along with another aviator. They work out their plans and finally bomb the cartel's home. It so happened that Luis, the heir to the Cali fortune was going to rat on his father and had stacked away money to run away using his girl friend as a conduit. His autocratic father has him caught and he is brought back home. Thus all the members are together when Winter strikes and takes his revenge. Winter escapes back to the States.

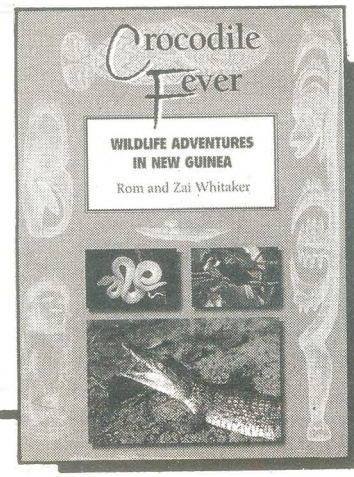
CROCODILE FEVER

By Rom and Zai Whitaker
Orient Longman
Price Rs. 575.00

Rom Whitaker, the eminent herpetologist and founder of the crocodile farm in India was invited by the United Nations and the World Wide Fund for Nature to do crocodile surveys deep inland in New Guinea and to help set up village crocodile farms. He went to the virgin lands with his wife and their five-month old son. The book narrates the story of Rom's travels through the land by sea, land and air.

The people in Papua and New Guinea, are backward and the land is rich in natural resources like a latter day Garden of Eden with a variety of wild life that is perhaps extinct in much of the rest of the world The locals had a barter system of commerce. But as most of them killed the crocodile for meat, these too were soon likely to be extinct. It was for this reason that the Administrators realised that crocodiles could be used as resource to sustain the hundreds of lowland tribes, who eked out a living by fishing and collecting sago.

Rom describes daring travels by boat, which takes him to the picturesque country. He also wonders how development will change the place forever.



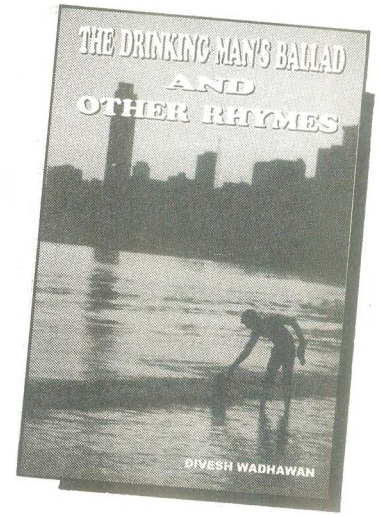
Rom also travels to the Indonesian half of Guinea and discovers another world altogether. For the tribal people of Irian Jaya, the only change is that instead of white colonial rule, it is the 'straight hairs' from Java who now run the show. Rom regrets that the Army and the police, the real outsiders have pushed the tribal away from their real homes.

The book has some beautiful pictures that makes the journey for the reader as graphic as narration does.

THE DRINKING MAN'S BALLAD AND OTHER RHYMES

By Divesh Wadhavan
Published by Jaico Books
Price Rs. 100/-

The author began his career in advertising and then landed in family business and also wrote verse. The title poem is an escape from the sordid world of reality. For the problems caused by the politicians and the bureaucrats, the only solution is to open the bottle and drink it up.



In 'Smokers Cough', the smoke related illness takes the smoker away from the cigarette. But once he is nursed back to health, he starts the tobacco urge again.

"In a Quick One' the lovers felt eternal and so they married. But the end of the story makes the poet feel that they had better not dilly dally and had a happy ending. The poems are light and make for interesting reading.

BOOK FREAK

Romance dominated the flood of new releases

February was a fairly busy month for the film industry. With the completion of Ramzan, over a dozen films were released as expected. Some really good and others outright gibberish. Another half a dozen romances made it to the screens as well. These were especially in keeping with the Valentine spirit that has caught on like rapidfire in the metro cities where the influence of the West is the most. Mush was easily the order of the day and particularly so in the Valentine week. Film distributors weren't too far behind their counterparts from other industries as far as cashing in on the revelry was concerned.

Among the Hindi films to make it to the screens was the much-awaited. **Aa Ab Laut Chalein,** from the RK banner, and starring Akshaye Khanna and Aishwarya Rai. While the response in Mumbai was good, the film's performance in other centres was far from encouraging. Other major releases included Gulzar's political thriller **Hu Tu Tu**, starring Sunil Shetty, Tabu and Nana Patekar, Raj Kanwar's courtroom caper **Daag**, starring Sanjay Dutt, Chandrachur Singh and Mahima Chowdhary; and **Hum Aapke Dil Mein Rehte Hain,** a breezy romance starring Anil Kapoor and Kajol. Of these only **Hum Aapke...** managed to strike the jackpot. Late February also saw the release of Tips Films' **Kachche Dhaage,** India's first real on-the-road film, and **Kaun,** Ram Gopal Verma's Indianised version of the Hitchcockian thriller **Wait Until Dark.** We'll wait and see how these fare at the box office.

With Valentine spirit in the air, even the foreign films had a blast. Among the films released last month were **Six Days Seven Nights,** starring Harrison Ford and Anne Heche; **Ever After,** starring Drew Barrymore; **Meet Joe Black,** starring Brad Pitt and Anthony Hopkins; **Practical Magic,** starring Sandra Bullock and Nicole Kidman; **Rush Hour**, starring Jackie Chan and Chris Tucker; **The Siege,** starring Denzel Washington, Bruce Willis and Annette Bening; and **You've Got Mail,** starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. And finally, the Julia Roberts-Susan Sarandon starrer, **Stepmom,** is all set for a March 4 release. Whew!

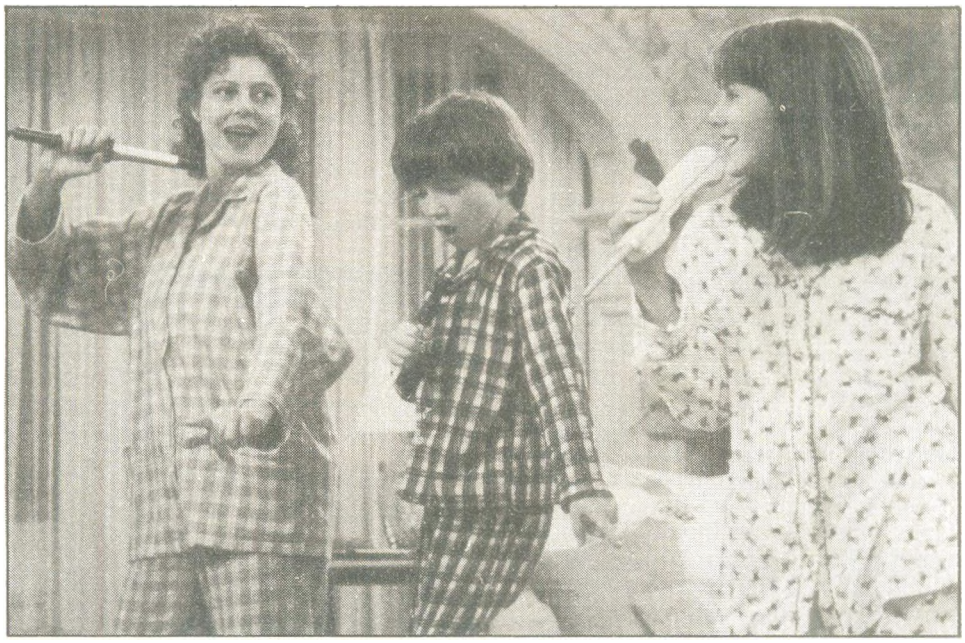
Stepmom

How on earth did both Susan Sarandon and Julia Roberts escape the notice of the Academy of Motion Pictures and Sciences is a mystery to me. Both women deliver Award-winning performances in Columbia Tristar's **Stepmom.** Yet neither actress was considered good enough for an Oscar nomination. Strange!

Chris Columbus, who directed delightful comedies like **Home Alone, Mrs. Doubtfire** and **Nine Months,** brings us a bittersweet, new film about the joys and challenges of family life in the 90s. **Stepmom,** his latest venture, is a tale about two strong, independent women who have nothing in common, but must forge a friendship to save a family from disintegrating.

Roberts plays Isabel, a career-minded photographer, forced into a role as unwelcome stepmother to her boyfriend Luke's (Ed Harris) two children - 12-year-old Anna (Jena Malone) and 7-year-old Ben (Liam Aiken). It's the universal dilemma of the 'non-traditional' family - Isabel and the children love Luke, but both parties cannot stick the sight of the other.

Susan Sarandon with her children Ben (Liam Aiken), and Anna (Jena Malone) in Columbia Pictures' 'Stepmom'



Susan Sarandon and Julia Roberts in 'Stepmom'

Enter Jackie (Susan Sarandon), the real mother of Anna and Ben. She's the peerless supermom, who is fiercely devoted to her kids. Jackie openly resents the intrusion of Isabel on a number of levels, and particularly because Isabel is far from successful at being any sort of mother to the kids at all.

The mutual hostility between the two apparently opposite women leads to a comical, and often complex interplay right through the story. But very soon circumstances force them to cast aside their differences and somehow make a connection for the family's sake.

Powerfully scripted and ably directed, the proceedings keep the viewer glued to the screen. Columbus once again shows us what a master of the medium he is, with a perfect blend of irreverent comedy and heart-stirring emotion. Tech-credits are shipshape, particularly the editing, lenswork and music score.

However the film is driven primarily by brilliant performances by its two chief protagonists. Sarandon is cool and composed as the supermom with a hurting heart. And Roberts is easygoing on the eye as ever. The chemistry between the two is electric everytime they appear on screen together. Ed Harris (who we last saw in **The Rock**) lends adequate support.

Tearjerker or comedy, **Stepmom** quite easily rates as the best film of the month. It aims straight for the heartstrings and just doesn't let go.

You've Got Mail

Director Nora Ephron falls back on Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan, the star pair whom she first brought together five and a half years back in **Sleepless in Seattle.** Her new caper, **You've Got Mail,** is a reworked version of Ernst Lubitsch's 1940 black and white classic, **The Shop Around The Corner,** starring Margaret Sullivan and James Stewart. That was the ultimate in sheer charm; a period comedy about two co-workers in a Budapest rations shop who don't realise that they're lonely hearts penpals.

Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks in 'You've Got Mail'

The ambience is about the same. Only this time around, the romance is on the internet (a sign of the times, I suppose).

Kathleen Kelly (Meg Ryan) and Joe Fox (Tom Hanks) live and work blocks from each other on New York's Upper West Side. Both buy their groceries from the same store, their coffee from the same cafe, roam the same streets. Both have charming lovers too. Joe lives with a hyperactive book editor Patricia Eden (Parker Posey); and Kathleen lives with a passionate newspaper columnist Frank Navasky (Greg Kinnear). But both believe life and love to be satisfactory - until they meet in a computer chat room and begin conversing on e-mail.

Under the electronic pseudonyms of Shopgirl and NY152, Kathleen and Joe find themselves confiding everything to their unseen computer correspondent - everything except their actual identities. But as their friendship warms into affection on the internet, the storm clouds are just beginning to brew.

Kathleen Kelly owns a children's bookstore in New York called The Shop Around The Corner, which she inherited from her mother and has been a community landmark for 40 years. And now her legacy and livelihood is about to be destroyed as Joe Fox opens his superstore, the latest in the national chain of Fox Books, a few blocks from Kathleen's. With its discounts, huge inventory and expresso bar, Joe is unwittingly about to put his faceless internet confidante out of business.

While a string of face-to-face confrontations between Joe and Kathleen follow, their alibis, NY152 and Shopgirl, find solace in the e-mails waiting for them at the end of the day. And finally decide to meet. But I'm not going to spoil your fun by revealing any more of the script.

Superbly scripted by Delia Ephron, the film manages to keep the viewer riveted to the proceedings, mainly due to top class performances from Hanks and Ryan. Kinnear (who received an Oscar nomination for **As Good As It Gets** last year) also manages to make an impression.

Happily enough, Nora Ephron doesn't tamper with the warmth and humour of the original, and serves out a delectable recipe in the end.

Just one last word. The film is almost like an advertisement for e-mail. I wonder what the good old postal department will have to say about this.

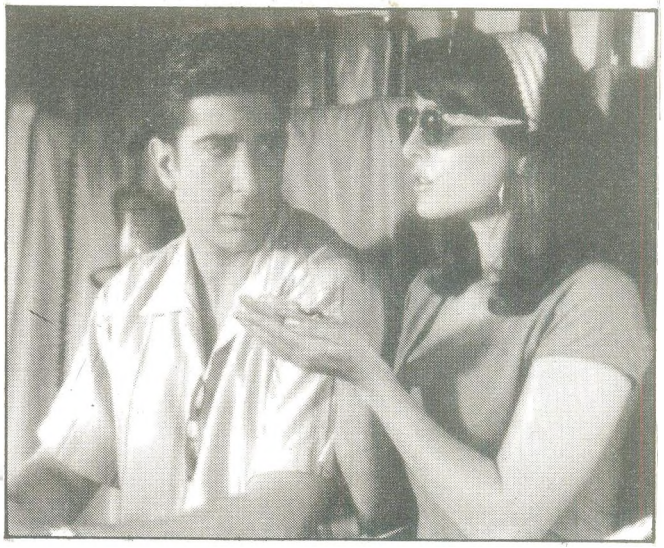
Quinn Harris (Harrison Ford) and Robin Monroe (Anne Heche, right) find themselves stranded on an island in the South Pacific.

Robin Monroe (Heche) becomes a passenger on Ford's (Centre) dilapidated cargo plane.

Six Days Seven Nights

Will the real Ivan Reitman stand up, please? It's hard to believe that the director, who gave us great comic capers like **Ghostbusters** (1984) and **Kindergarten Cop** (1990), can come up with an eminently forgettable yarn like **Six Days Seven Nights.** Despite the commanding screen presence of Harrison Ford (considered by many to be the sexiest man in the world), there's a lot that's gone amiss with this experiment.

Firstly, it looks to be a hastily put together pudding of several adventure films, particularly John Huston's Academy Award winning **The African Queen** (1951), starring Humphrey Bogart and Katherine Hepburn - and Lina Wertmuller's provocative adult film, **Swept Away** (1975 - Italian). However **Six Days...** totally lacks the charm of these classics.



David Schwimmer (Left), Robin's fiance Frank with Jacqueline Obradors (Angelica), Quinn's co- pilot and unofficial paramour.

Ford is Quinn Harris, a cargo pilot, a rough hewn aviator living an uncomplicated existence in Paradise. Flying freight in his weather-beaten old plane, he is content with the comfortable living he makes.

Robin Monroe (Anne Heche) is a sharp, driven editor of a woman's magazine in New York, who comes to Hawaii on holiday with her fiancee Frank Martin (David Schwimmer).

Both Robin and Quinn live their lives just the way they want to - until they meet, quite by chance. When an unexpected editorial deadline requires Robin to be in Tahiti, she reluctantly bribes Quinn to fly her there. But nature has a decidedly different course for these two when a freak squall forces them

to crashland on an uncharted island.

Cut out completely from the outside world, the two have no patience for each other and keep spewing venom - until they open their minds to the biggest task that lies ahead - survival. Predictably enough, romance ensues as the two castaways sail through a series of adventures, combating the elements until they figure a way to head back home.

All the essentials for a rollicking, rollercoaster ride are there, but somehow the director leaves them untapped. The script often seems to head nowhere and the tempo is far too slack.

Worst of all, there seems to be very little chemistry between the lead pair. Even superb actors like Ford and Heche deliver listless performances, failing to shore up the film as a result.

Gorgeously filmed on location in Hawaii, the breathtaking visuals are the only saving grace.

Ajay Devgan and Manisha Koirala in 'Kachche Dhaage'

Kachche Dhaage

Milan Luthria, an understudy of Mahesh Bhatt, makes his directorial debut with **Kachche Dhaage,** India's first really genuine attempt to make an on-the-road film. Given that Indian cinema is gradually upping its technical standards and making films of substance, it's high time someone tried experimenting with new ideas and topics. **Kachche Dhaage** may not be racy like **The Fugitive** or classy like **A Perfect World,** or any other Hollywood film of the genre for that matter. But it's the effort and the intent that must be lauded.

Fronted by bankable stars like Ajay Devgan, Manisha Koirala, and backed by a brilliant music score by the late Nasrat Fateh Ali Khan, Tips Films can safely expect to draw a hefty initial. But given the heavy competition this time of the year, its long-term prospects still look iffy.

The plot revolves around a small time bordertown thief (Ajay Devgan), who suddenly stumbles upon his lost family. Summoned to the bedside of a father he never knew at the behest of his mother, Ajay discovers that he has a stepbrother (Saif Ali Khan) living in Mumbai whom he must reconcile with.

It's contempt at first sight for both half brothers when they meet up. But blood is thicker than water, and that's the moral of the story. The two must unite even if it's just a few *kachche dhaage* that binds them. Fate presents the opportunity for thief and city slicker to forge an alliance when the latter, by a strange and long turn of events, finds himself embroiled in a murder case, and only his half brother can save him.

It's the usual, thrills, spills and chills from this point onward as director Luthria puts his road act together. Thus you have the boys on the run from the law (and the real baddies). And they're desperate enough to take any which transport that comes their way, be it trains, trucks, cars and police jeeps, even a cute little camel caravan. Count on the mandatory fisticuffs, gunfights and explosion as well, as the two strive to establish their innocence.

The plot promises much but sadly fizzles out into nonsensical claptrap, particularly in the second half. Luthria loses his way as he allows the film to drift away. Action takes the upper hand and all niceties take a dive downstream. Romance is sidestepped with the heroines being utilised for just their ornamental value.

Action is unquestionably the standout factor in the film. The sequence where a speeding train crashes into a stationary bus on a level crossing may be reminiscent of a Hollywood film we've seen (and blatantly copied by Mahesh Bhatt in **Criminal**), but it's brilliant all the same. Editing is poor and makes the story difficult to follow as it shuttles between Mumbai, Delhi, Rajasthan and the border, until finally the viewer gives a damn about location.

As the brooding young man, Ajay Devgan is rock solid in the film. He's by far one of the most improved actors on the scene today. Saif Ali, with his bag of one liners, is the ideal foil to Ajay's intensity. As mentioned earlier, Manisha Koirala and Namrata Shirodkar have little else to do than shake their buttocks to Nusrat Fateh Ali's tunes.

That brings us to the music score. Well, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan is the chief reason why the film's *so garam*. The music is simply stupendous. The climactic qawaali, picturised on Anu Kapoor, would have most certainly been picturised on Nusrat himself, had he been alive when the film was shot. But all the same, his music is one good reason to see the film.

IVOR VAZ

V I D E O

Come Feb. - March '99 and movie lovers all over the globe wait with bated breath for the greatest cinematic show on earth, 'The Oscar Night'. 'And Winner is....', becomes the most coveted and cherished line ever spoken.

But even without the lure of Oscars Hollywood is always at its creative best and springs one pleasant surprise after another. Remember the immortal classic 'The Ten Commandments', well now we have an animated version titled 'The Prince of Egypt'. And at home animation is a lost word. So, much for our cinematic creativity! Hitchcock classic 'Psycho' is remade frame to frame and result, as the grapevine has it, has been praiseworthy. Not only that George Lucas' trend-setting magnum opus trilogy 'Star Wars' now has a prequel trilogy telling viewers of the story that took place before the original trilogy. The first in the order is titled, 'The Phantom Menace'. Cinematic adventure and excellence never ceases in Hollywood. And now to roll on with our selections of the month.

The first one is a tear-jerker, 'Stepmom'. Of loving,caring and sharing, of exploring relationships comes yet another noteworthy flick starring Susan Sarandon of 'Dead Man Walking' fame and Julia Roberts of the 'Pretty Woman' fame.

Pitted against each other, these two women and their lifestyle and their confrontation form the crux of the film. Jackie (Susan Sarandon) is the mean, a bit jealous ex-wife of Luke (Ed Harris) with two kids, Jena and Liam. But, Jackie can't get along with Luke's chic,dazzling fashion photographer, savvier girlfriend Isabel (Julia Roberts).

The two women bitch about one another, fight, exchange pungent quips. Jackie is jealous of Isabel as she is young, a successful career woman and knows the right way to win over the kids. Isabel is patient with the demands, tantrums and routines of the kids. But Jackie still rules the roost.

The turning-point comes when Luke asks Isabel to marry him. Even the kids warm up to Isabel. More so other factors like Jackie learning about Isabel having advanced stage cancer all leads to Isabel scoring over Jackie ultimately and winning acceptance from the kids and Jackie as the would-be stepmom.

A heart-warming film, 'Stepmom' underlines the human effort needed to make relationships work. Inspite of her electrifying presence Roberts does not score over Sarandon's superb performance as Jackie. A must-see, 'Stepmom' is a telling comment on urban lifestyles and all that goes with it.

With Hollywood always up to new tricks and experiments, the next title is very much a case in point. Director John Madden weaves a slightly confused but nevertheless an intrinsic plot in the movie 'Shakespeare in Love'.

Imagine a writer of romantic tales himself is in love. Director John Madden and writer Marc Norman weave a myth about the man called Shakespeare. Myth because there is very little factual basis of their interpretation of the leading role. This is not exactly the Bard we know of but the makers used the play 'Romeo and Juliet' as a take - off point for a fantasy that interweaves Shakespeare's doomed love affair with the writing of his most powerful romances - implying that the genius of his work was probably inspired by the depth of his despair.

The movie opens with William (Joseph Fiennes) struggling to overcome a writer's block while composing a new comedy which he titles 'Romeo and Ethel: The Pirate's Daughter', William's despair disappears as he sights Lady Viola played by Gwyneth Paltrow of 'The Perfect Murder' fame. The two fall in love and Shakespeare is back to writing. Blurring the lines between art and reality, the cinematic juxtaposition of his personal life and the plays he writes and stages is similar to films, like 'The French Lientenant's Woman' and Bizet's 'Carmen' where you reach a point when you can't tell what's real and what isn't. And that's what makes 'Shakespeare in Love' confusing. Nevertheless directorial treatment has made it a movie worth watching. Although, 'Shakespeare in Love' offers us no real insight into who the Bard really was. But it's inspired. It takes you through literary history being written and..... rewritten.

Strictly for the discerning cine buffs.

Speaking about this year's Oscars, one name that must be mentioned is that of Tom Hanks. This great guy who bagged two Oscars in a row first for 'Forrest Gump' and then for 'Philadelphia' could be very much in the running for another Oscar nomination in Spielberg's 'Saving Private Ryan'. And that itself is a record. To add to Hanks laurels, his latest, romantic comedy 'You've Got Mail' has enjoyed almost the same box office returns as 'Saving Private Ryan'.

'You've Got Mail' has won tremendous accolades as it promises to be a romantic comedy with a difference. In spite of churning out romantic comedies by the dozen, they still have the cinematic creativity to spring surprises like 'Sleepless in Seattle', 'One Fine Morning' and 'A Walk in the Clouds'. Now it's 'You've Got Mail' starring Meg Ryan and Tom Hanks Two opposing personalities can't stand each other at shopping centres, at parties, at the office but fall in love on-line. Yes, so much for all the website and Internet

W A T C H

nonsense ruling our lives. And that makes, 'You've Got Mail' an absolute modern, in-vogue, with-the-times romantic comedy.

Unfortunately, and surprisingly a watchable print on the VHS format is still not available in spite of the movie enjoying a 'Theatre' release. That only shows the fast declining popularity of the VHS format. So till we get a good print, let's wait for the best.

Animation has continued to be a hot favourite genre with the Hollywood guys. And they have done the genre a world of good. Take the Disney's treasure trove and you have countless animation jewels. Here's one more.

We have rivetting, tough-as-nails but yet an extremely inspiring tale of a woman's courage and determination in our next title 'Mulan'.

Based on an ancient Chinese Legend meant to highlight and pay tribute to woman power.

Mulan is a brave young woman hailing from a family of warriors. Mulan in her young days witnesses the strife and struggle her people go through to counter the growing menace and threat from the barbaric Hun tribes.

Mulan's father is too old to be a soldier on the battlefield and too honourable to quietly accept submission. Mulan is on the horns of a daring defiant dilemma.

For the sake of the honour of her family and race she disguises herself as a dominating, raging male warrior and secretly replaces her father's imperial status in the army.

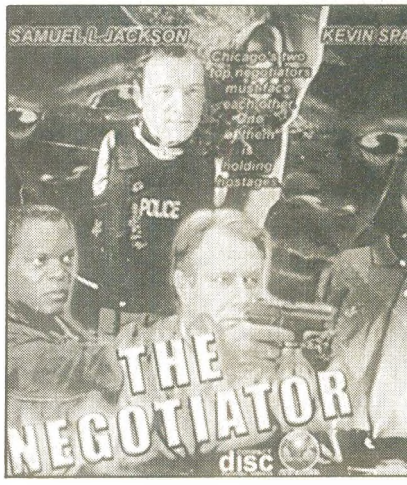
Then 'she' has to or rather 'he', Mulan has to encounter the villainous Hun tribe leader Shun-Yu. Mulan by God's grace is aided ably by her feisty, fire-breathing guardian dragon Mushu, who trains her to be brave and a disciplined warrior.

A typical Disney feature, the story is well-done to touch you. Excellent music score, and deft direction make 'Mulan' a treat for kids and grown-ups alike, which is the case with most Disney films.

FLASH! FLASH! At the time of going to the press the most awaited Oscar nominations were announced by the Academy. 'Shakespeare In Love' wins 13 nominations, followed by 'Saving Private Ryan' with 11. Surprises: 'Elizabeth' edges out 'The Truman Show' from the best picture category; Tom Hanks for 'Saving Private Ryan' gets the Best Actor nomination but the surprise omissions from Best Actor nominations are Michael Caine (Little Voice) and John Travolta for 'Civil Action'. For desi cinema lovers, the absence of Shekhar Kapur's name from the nominations of Best Director Category for 'Elizabeth' was a big, big disappointment. Was Mr. Kapur a victim of racist tendencies or did he lose out to other nominations on Academy's voting strength Well, it can be anybody's guess!

Coming back to our monthly picks, the next one is 'Six Days Seven Nights'. Indiana Jones is back, so-to-say in this rather crazy, a bit contrived mix of romance, comedy and action in 'Six Days Seven Nights.'

Harrison Ford is Quinn, a grouchy pilot, who tried his best to save a planewreck but failed. Frustrated and marooned on a pirate infested desert island, Quinn has to put up with another fussy, hard-nut passenger Robin Anne Heche. The twosome are poles part, spitting venom at each other much like the leading pair of 'You've Got Mail'. The difference here is that they have to be rescued.



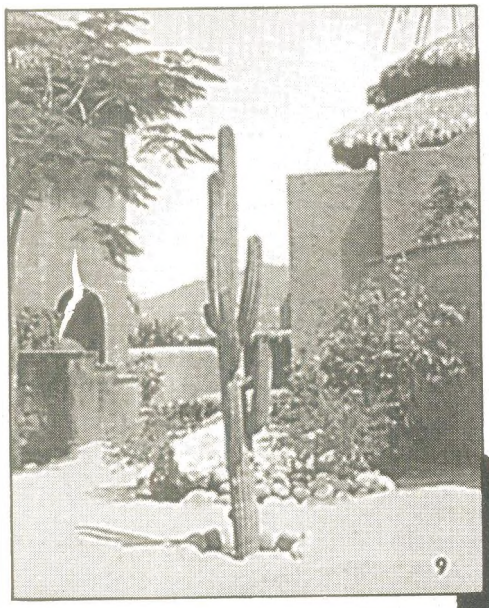
Robin Monroe is a New York magazine editor on her way to Tahiti for a shoot and Quinn Harris, the South Seas pilot is flying his single engine plane. To the great dismay of both Robin and Quinn the plane runs into all sorts of trouble and then the twosome face some 'pirate' trouble too. Unfortunately the chemistry between Quinn and Robin never comes to a boiling point. There is a lot of adventure action too as the pilot tries to rescue both himself and the hard-headed editor from pirate menace. 'Six Days Seven Nights' comes across as a mishmash of John Huston's 'The African Queen', Lina Wertmuller's 'Swept Away', and more recent 'Romancing The Stone'.

Although Quinn does end up playing an Indiana Jones of a kind, a lot more was expected from director of hilarious box office flicks like 'Ghostbusters' (1984) and 'Kindergarten Cop' (1990). Worth watching if you don't mind a typical American entertainer.

NAKUL BHAGVAT

TOP TEN FOR MARCH '99

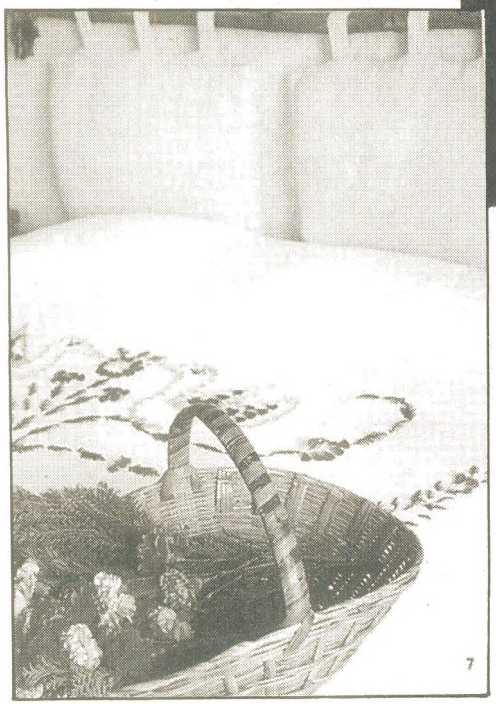
1. **Stepmon - drama - (Susan Sarandon, Julia Roberts)**
2. **Mulan - drama - (Animation)**
3. **There's Something About Mary - comedy - (Cameron Diaz)**
4. **Shakespeare In Love - drama - (Gwyneth Paltrow)**
5. **You've Got Mail - romantic comedy - (Tom Hanks)**
6. **Six Days Seven Nights - romance - action - comedy - (Harrison Ford)**
7. **Negotiator - action - (Samuel Jackson)**
8. **Rush Hour - action - (Jackie Chan)**
9. **Ever After - fantasy - (Drew Barrymore)**
10. **Antz - drama - (Animation)**



La Casa Que Canta resembles a surreal hill resort.

Mexico's fabulous hotel resorts

At La Casa Que Canta petals are delicately arranged on bedspreads.

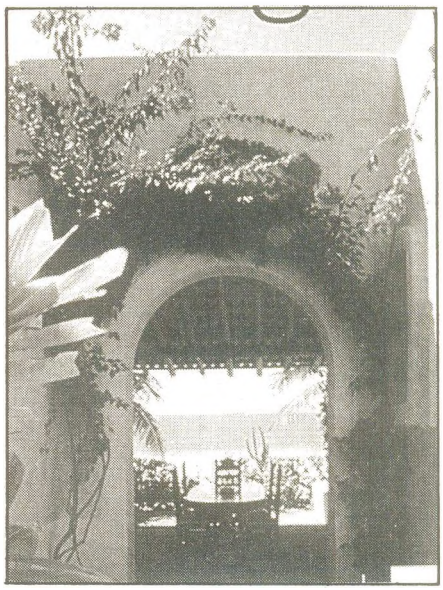


When it comes to holidays, even Americans who have Mexico on their doorstep tend to underrate and overlook it. So it is hardly surprising that the British need some convincing that it is vaut le voyage - and quite a long one, at that. These days though, there are more reasons than ever to go. Not only is Mexico a place of amazing beauty and peace with great stretches of unspoiled countryside, extraordinary colonial towns and the surprisingly vital and visible legacy of the great Mayan archaeological sites on the Yucatan Peninsula; there are also-a more recent development-some of the world's most beautiful and sophisticated resorts. These range from Isabel Goldsmith's private paradise on the Pacific to a "new" sixteenth-century hacienda in the Yucatan. Once you are there, it makes sense to try out several of these hotels, or - since some are best reached via cities such as Miami or LA - to visit the States in the same trip.

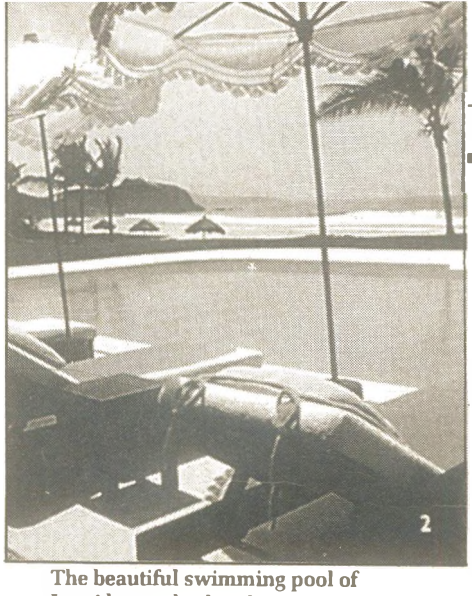
Las Ventanas Al Paraiso

Most of Mexico's 760-mile-long Baja California peninsula is a sparsely populated land of rugged mountains and inhospitable deserts. The exception is the relatively short (20-mile) stretch at the southern tip between San Jose del Cabo and Cabo San Lucas. Here, an ever increasing number of resort hotels takes advantage of the area's flawless weather, offering travellers some of the world's best sport-fishing, sea-kayaking, golf and even whale watching.

The newest and brightest star on Cabo's hotel horizon is the stunning Las Ventanas al Paraiso ("windows on paradise"), managed by Texas billionaire Caroline Hunt's Rosewood Hotels group. A compound of stark whitewashed



Flowers at Rancho La Puerta



The beautiful swimming pool of Las Alamandas hotel

adobe structures that bring to mind the Greek Islands, Las Ventanas boasts not only Mexico's largest hotel guest rooms but also some of its most attractive; pebble-mosaic floors, terracotta fireplaces, shaded terraces with glorious views of the deep-blue Sea of Cortez. The ocean here is too rough for safe swimming, but Las Ventanas more than compensates with a beautiful multi-level infinity pool. The resort also offers tennis, windsurfing, riding and a Robert Trend Jones golf course that makes the most of its desert-by-the-sea setting. Las Ventanas al Paraiso, Los Cabos, Baja California Sur 23400 (00 52 11 44 03 00; fax 00 52 11 44 03 01). From US$475 per night for a double room, plus tax and service charge. Getting there: fly to San Jose del Cabo via Los Angeles, Dallas or Mexico City.

Hotelito Desconocido

The dream hideaway of Italian fashion designer Marcello Murzilli, of Charro Jeans, is a two-hour drive south of Puerto Vallarta, the resort town made legendary by Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. Enjoying a spectacularly isolated setting alongside a tropical lagoon, the Hotelito Desconocido ("little unknown hotel") is an enchanting village of thatched-roof adobe bungalows, called palafitos, many rising on stilts above the water.

Inside these chic shacks, guests find handcarved poster beds, mural-painted adobe walls, tiled open-air showers, but no electricity, since Murzilli wanted to make his Hotelito as ecologically correct as possible. Water is solar heated, ceiling fans solar powered, and at night, candles, lanterns and flaming torches light the rooms, walkways, bar and restaurant - the effect is so romantic you'll never feel the same way about a light bulb again. Since no power boats are allowed, room service arrives by pastel rowing boat. These same boats also take guests across the lagoon to a sandy island with a vast beach, plus a free-form saltwater pool, rustic restaurant and nine more rooms for guests who don't mind falling asleep to the sound of the crashing waves of the awesome Pacific.

Back on the mainland, a small spa offers natural beauty treatments; and mountain bikes and horses are available for rides into the funky town of Cruz de Loreto, two and a half miles away - about as far as you'll want to stray.

Hotelito Desconocido, Cruz de Loreto, Tomatlan, Jalisco (00 52 32 98 52 09; fax 00 52 32 98 51 09). From US$200 for a double room, plus service and 17 per cent tax, from December 1 to April 14. Mandatory full American meal plan is an additional US$55 per person. Getting there: via Houston, Dallas, Mexico City.

Las Alamandas

When Isabel Goldsmith (daughter of the late Sir Jimmy) inherited a sizeable parcel of unspoilt land between Puerto Vallarta and Manzanillo from her maternal grandfather, Bolivian tin king Antenor Patino, she also inherited plans to turn the property into a largescale condo development. Happily, she created Las Alamandas instead, an extraordinarily sybaritic retreat with just 11 rooms housed in four villas on 1,500 acres. Armed with unlimited funds and flawless taste, Goldsmith took charge of every aspect of the property.

The result is a place so perfect - from the strategic positioning of the 200 imported palm trees to the arrangement of the hot pink and cool turquoise pillows on your banquette - that at first it's almost intimidating. But it doesn't take long to slip into the luxuries of Las Alamandas - the four enormous private beaches, for example, each more beautiful than the last; the 60-ft pool by the sea; the horses available for sunset rides, and, especially, the attentive staff always ready with a margarita. Ultimately Las Alamandas provides a slice of a divinely simple life that only the very rich can afford to orchestrate.

Las Alamandas, Quemaro, Costalegre, Jalisco (00 52 32 85 55 00; fax 00 52 32 85 50 27). European reservations, 00 33 1 40 49 02 34. From US$390 for a double room from November 1 to May 31 (high season). Getting there: fly to Puerto Vallarta via Houston, Dallas or Mexico City.

La Casa Que Canta

When it opened in 1992, this spectacular, cliffhanging resort made the covers of numerous magazines and was quickly snatched up by Hollywood as a location for films such as *The Shawshank Redemption* and *When A Man Loves A Woman*.

Looking like a surreal hill town of pink adobe houses with thick thatched roofs linked by an intricate network of swimming pools, walkways, terracotta terraces and sun decks, La Casa Que Canta would be worth seeking out even if it were in the middle of nowhere. Instead it fronts the magnificent bay of the still unspoiled pacific coastal community of Zihuatanejo, where fishermen park their boats on the town beach and teenagers play basketball in the nearby plaza. Eight of the 24 suites have their own swimming pools, but all share the same look: pebbled floors, rustic Mexican furniture, pink-tiled showers, and terraces with dramatic, straight-down views of the hotel's many levels, all bursting with brightly coloured tropical flowers. The maids here double as floral artists, secretly arranging bougainvillea petals in intricate "embroidered" designs on bedspreads and tucking them carefully between towels and flannels.

The food is as stylish as the rest of the place, with menus created by one of Mexico's most famous chefs, Laura Caraza. Just below the hotel is the mile-long, cafe-studded Playa la Ropa; further afield are stables, tennis courts and a golf course.

La Casa Que Canta, Camino Escenico a la Playa la Ropa, Zihuatanejo, Guerrero 40880. Reservations, Small Luxury Hotels, 0800964470. From US$280 in high season (January through April) for a double room. Getting there: fly to Zihuatanejo via Mexico City.

Hacienda Katanchel

Although known primarily for its spectacular Mayan ruins, Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula is also home to some of the country's most impressive haciendas. Originally

cattle ranches, most of these vast spreads turned to the lucrative business of growing and processing henequen (sisal) at the end of the nineteenth century. When sisal fell from favour in the Fifties, many of the haciendas went belly up, but today a handful are coming back to life as country-house hotels.

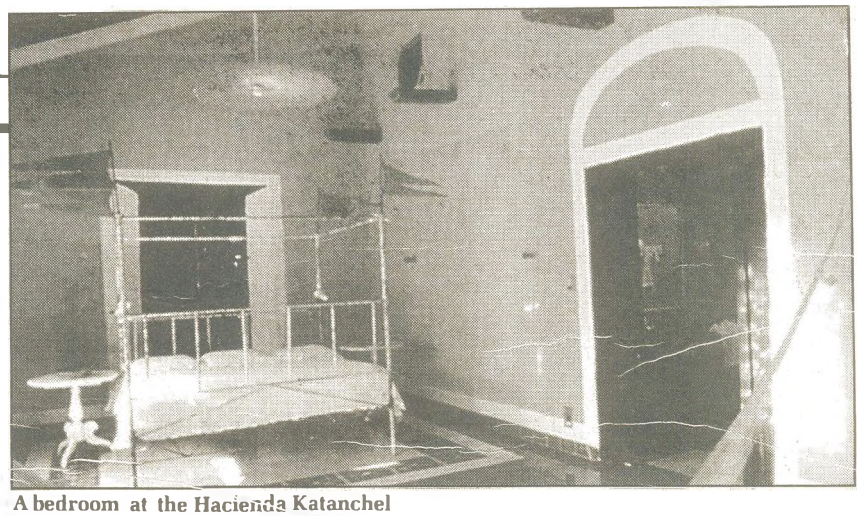
Best of the batch is the luxurious Hacienda Katanchel, about a half-hour's drive east of the Yucatan's colonial capital Merida. Spanish architect Anibal Gonzalez and his wife, Mexican environmentalist Monica Hernandez, have created this 740-acre estate, consisting of lawns, formal gardens and tall trees that are home to more than 100 species of bird. Most of the 39 suites are in individual bungalows that were originally workers' cottages, whereas the Hacienda's former sisal-processing factory now houses a handsome, open-to-the-breezes restaurant as well as a series of salons for cocktails, reading, billiards and parlour games. Back outside, the enormous pool is full of soft, chlorine-free water.

From here, most of the famous Mayan cities - Chichen Itza, Uxmal - are easy day trips; but even more fascinating are the secret archaeological sites and little-known towns nearby, such as the Mayan temple at Ake or the elegant yellow city of Izamal, with its spectacular sixteenth-century convent built on top of a Mayan pyramid. Hacienda Katanchel, Tixkokob, 97470 Yucatan, (00 52 99 23 40 20; fax 00 52 99 23 40 00). From $300 (plus 17 per cent tax) for a double room, including breakfast and transfers from the airport at Merida. Getting there: fly to Cancun or via Miami to Merida.

Playa Blanc

Where most of the Yucatan's white-beached Caribbean coast is being developed all too quickly, one area remains wonderfully pristine. Called the Sian Ka' an Biosphere Reserve, this 1.3-million-acre chunk of the southern Yucatan Peninsula has been designated a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in order to protect its beaches, lagoons, jungles and coral reefs.

A handful of lodges and fishing camps offer rustic accommodation here, but to rough it in great style, you have only one option; Playa Blanca. Just getting to this five-cottage resort on a private offshore island is an adventure: a charter flight from Cancun, a boat ride across the bay and finally a dirt-road drive down the island. The payoff is your white adobe bungalow with its thatch roof, big terrace and crisp minimal interior - not to mention an embarrassment of empty beaches, sensational snorkelling and sea-kayaking, even your own private Mayan ruin. A bar/restaurant pavilion is also on the property - but that's about it. No phones, no faxes, no organised activities... Who could ask for anything more? Or less? Playa Blanca, Sian Ka'an Biosphere Reserve, Quintana Roo (Houston office, 00 1 713 526 3739; fax 00 1 713 526 4302). From US$1, 625 per person, for the required minimum stay of three days, including meals and air charter out of Cancun. Getting there: fly to Cancun.



A bedroom at the Hacienda Katanchel

Casa De Sierra Nevada

Founded in 1542, the exquisite colonial town of San Miguel de Allende is three hours' drive north of Mexico City and one of the country's most important cultural centres. As well as a calendar crammed with concerts, dance events and fiestas, it is known for its art schools, language institutes and large population of ex-pat writers and artists.

Providing instant access to the lively local scene, the Casa de Sierra Nevada is just two blocks from the town plaza. Created from 10 sixteenth-century manor houses, the hotel has 37 suites, all with fireplaces, hand-painted tiled baths, and just the right mix of antiques and contemporary pieces. Gardens, courtyards, a small spa and a large swimming pool are further reasons to stay here. In addition, the hotel's owner runs a ranch out of town, offering riding as well as instruction in Spanish dressage. You can also hike or mountain bike in the nearby La Canada de los Pajaritos forest.

Casa de Sierra Nevada, Hospicio 35, San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, C.P. 37700 (00 52 41 52 70 40; fax 00 52 41 52 23 37 or 52 14 36). From US$168 for a deluxe double, plus 17 per cent VAT and local tax. Getting there: fly nonstop to Mexico City.

Rancho La Puerta

A three-hour drive from Los Angeles, this no-frills Baja California resort is the mother of the modern health spa. Created almost 60 years ago by Edmond and Deborah Szekely (who went on to found the legendary Golden Door in southern California), Rancho La Puerta follows a simple formula that combines exercise and healthy eating with a good dose of pampering in the form of massages, facials, wraps, rubs and scrubs.

Days begin with sunrise hikes in the wildflower-covered Kuchumaa foothills, followed by yoga, aerobics, swimming, tennis, volleyball or perhaps something more New Agey such as an Inner Journey meditation class. A range of accommodation is available - from unpretentious ranch-house rooms to grand villas. No matter where you stay rates are a fraction of what you would pay at The Golden Door.

Rancho La Puerta, Tecate, Baja California (Escondido, California office, 00 1 760 761 4139; fax 00 1 760 744 5007). From US$1, 590 for a week in a Ranchera studio, including meals, classes and use of all facilities; any spa treatments are additional. Getting there; fly nonstop to Los Angeles.

Inclusive holidays to Mexico can be arranged through Worldwide Journeys & Expeditions (0171 381 8638) and Cathy Matos Tours (01712842550)

"Shakespeare In Love" walks away with highest Oscar nominations

"Shakespeare In Love", (Paramount film) has received 13 Oscar nominations, the highest for this year.

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE is a romantic comedy for the 1990s set in the 1590s. It imaginatively unfolds the witty and timeless tale behind the creation of the greatest love story ever told.

It is the summer of 1593, and the rising young star of London's theatre scene. Will Shakespeare (Joseph Fiennes), faces a scourge like no other: a paralyzing bout of writer's block. While the great Elizabethan age of entertainment unfolds around him. Will is without inspiration or material. No matter how he tries, and despite pressure from financiers and theatre owners, he just can't seem to work up any enthusiasm for his latest play, "Romeo and Ethel, the Pirate's Daughter."

What Will needs is a muse - and in an extraordinary moment in which life imitates art, he finds and falls for a woman who draws him into his own dramatic adventure of starcrossed love.

It all begins when Lady Viola (Gwyneth Paltrow), desperate to become an actor at a time when women were forbidden from such depravity, disguises herself as a man to audition for Will's play. But the guise slips away as their passion ignites. Now Will's quill again begins to flow, this time turning love into words, as Viola becomes his real-life Juliet and Romeo finds his reason to exist.

A scene from "Shakespeare In Love"

Yet all is not well in Will's world. For even as the parchment begins to pile up, he is plagued by real-life twists of fate - including the unavoidable reality that Lady Viola must marry the insufferable Lord Wessex (Colin Firth) at the command of Queen Elizabeth (Judi Dench).

In a whirl of mistaken identities, mixed-up messages and misbegotten desires - between bawdy brawls, duels with jealous husbands - Will Shakespeare searches for a resolution not only to his play but to his own undying passion.

Going beyond Shakespeare's notions of love and into his love-life, SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE brings to life an Elizabethan world not unlike our own. Here is a world in which commercialism is threatening creativity, in which heads of state get involved in entertainment, in which bedroom romps affect what gets produced, in which egos rage out of control, in which artistic rivalries and feuds abound, in which children are titillated by violence and women never get any roles - and here, too, is a world in which love triumphs over all this and more.

SHAKESPEARE IN LOVE directed by John Madden is ultimately the tale of man and woman trying to make love work in the 90s — the 1590s. It is a story with humour, romance and intelligence.

About Shakespeare In Love

1590's London - amidst the great heyday of Elizabethan entertainment, two rival theatre houses, The Curtain by Richard Burbage and The Rose owned by Philip Henslow, competed for the same audience by promising to thrill and delight with new plays and great actors. Under pressure to satisfy the overwhelming demand for new works, a rising young writer by the name of Will Shakespeare who inspired by love penned stunning play entitled "Romeo and Juliet." This twisting, turning, fiery romance both on stage and off will break the hearts and inspire the souls of lovers around the world for centuries.

But how, in a time of plagues and monarchs, did this often comical, upstart, struggling scribe come to express such timeless passion in such perfectly life-like story and words?

Could it have been that Shakespeare himself was madly in love?

Running away with this imaginative concept, screenwriters Marc Norman and Tom Stoppard have brought forth a delightfully romantic comedy about how one lone writer navigated his own heart's outrageous choice to generate the heights of romance.

On March 21, the Oscar Awards ceremony will take place in Los Angeles and most likely this film will walk away with most of the Oscars. Coincedentally another period film "Elizabeth" directed by our very own Shekhar Kapur is vying for 8 Oscars!

GRAFFITI

What do you call four blonde air-hostesses lying on the ground ?
– An air-mattress !

OVERHEARD: "I said to my mother-in-law, 'our house is your house'-Last week, she sold it !"

Did you hear about the girl who was so thin she had tattooed on her chest - "In case of sex, this side up"?

Milking cows is simple – any 'jerk' can do it !

ALIMONY: The screw you get for the screw you got !

What's bimbo's favourite nursery rhyme?
– Humpme Dumpme!

A 'modest girl' is one who pulls down the shades before she changes her mind !

Virginity is like a balloon - one prick and it's gone !

What are the seven ages of a woman ?
– Her own-and six guesses !

Contributed by Shashank & Ashu Shekhar

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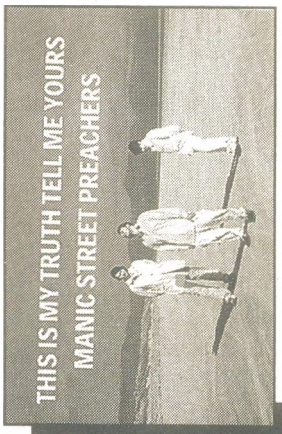

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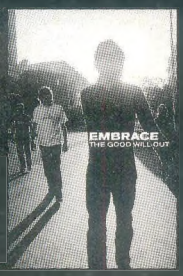
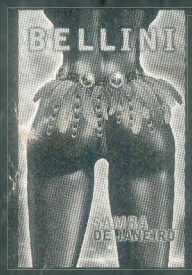
VIRGIN SOUNDS FOR A NEW MILLENNIUM

◎ The Verve

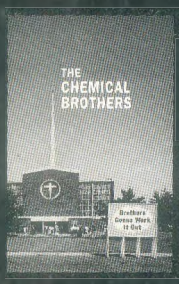


○ Embrace



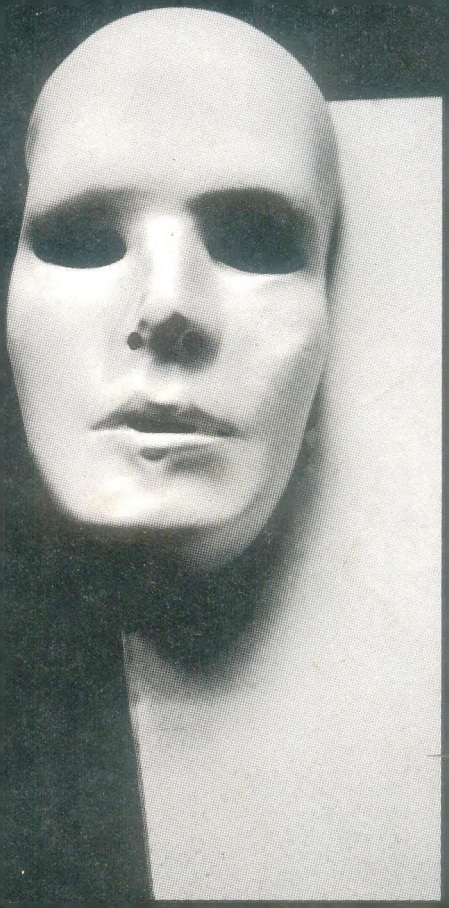
○ Bellini

⊙ Massive Attack



○ Chemical Brothers

○ Los Umbrellos



○ Adiemus

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